THE HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS OF INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND,

SINCE THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION;

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION, CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES, AND OF THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTI-CHRISTIAN ERROR, UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION.

BY

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TO

CHRISTIANS OF ALL COMMUNIONS

THE

FOLLOWING WORK

IS

Dedicated;

AS

AN HUMBLE ATTTEMPT TO ELUCIDATE

THOSE GREAT SCRIPTURAL

PRINCIPLES,

THE SPIRIT OF WHICH IS CHERISHED, MORE OR LESS,

BY ALL

WHO WORTHILY BEAR

THE

CHRISTIAN NAME.

PREFACE.

It has been thought by some, and has even been intimated to the Author, that the present times are not exactly suited to the publication of such a work as the present. After endeavouring to ascertain the reasons for this opinion, in so far as they may be gathered, it is conceived that they resolve themselves into the following particulars: 1. The demands of the age upon the practical energies of Christians, in the diffusion of a simple gospel. 2. The divided state of the church, which seems to require a healing process, rather than one calculated to foment differences of opinion. 3. The temper of the times, which calls for deeds rather than words, in connexion with matters of religious duty and observance.—These appear to the Author to be the only, or at least the main, reasons for the opinion to which reference is made. After giving them the most serious consideration in his power, he is constrained to conclude that they are insufficient, and would bespeak the candid attention of the reader, while he endeavours to state the grounds on which he has arrived at this conclusion.

With respect to the *first*, it is admitted that the present age makes great and increasing demands upon the practical energies of Christian men. Happily, the cause of missions, whether abroad or at home, is so far advanced, that there can scarcely be any connexion with the Church of Christ, in any one of its several communions, without being

appealed to frequently, earnestly, and powerfully, in its support. But has not this always been the case more or less? and is it not likely to be so in future, for an indefinite period? Is it not a cheering fact, and a reason for the serious investigation of such subjects as the present, rather than otherwise? Does not ecclesiastical history—in part, at least, the theme of the present work—teach us the importance of diffusing scriptural views on the subject of the church's constitution, in connexion with all our evangelizing efforts? Was not missionary enterprize emphatically the work of the apostolic age? and did not the apostles and first Christians connect all their successes with the actual institution of certain fixed principles of church polity? Did they not plant churches on a certain definite foundation of ecclesiastical organization? Do not the records which meet us in our department of inquiry teach us, that in the ages succeeding the apostolic, the source of error in doctrine, and corruption in practice, is to be traced to a departure from the apostolic precedent, which combined the diffusion of doctrines with the institution of principles? Did not the spirit of missionary enterprise, of a certain kind, evangelize Europe, and bring the gospel to our shores? and was it not mainly on account of the want of a co-ordinate diffusion of scriptural church principles, that that gospel became so universally corrupted—so much so, as ultimately to retard its progress, and reduce the church into a mere worldly and hierarchical system of spiritual domination, from which the nations of Europe are not yet free, and against which the truth has yet to contend? And if it be so, is it not right that the most practical supporters of missions should seriously consider the question, whether the conquests of the gospel, in order to

be permanent, should not be connected with gospel institutions, a scriptural worship, and primitive practices?

With respect to the *second* point, it is admitted that the Church of Christ is, and for an almost indefinite period—reaching back into the past through centuries—has been, in a divided and distracted state, presenting anything but the aspect which an enlightened Christian desires to behold, or which the Word of God appears to sanction. It is also admitted that healing, rather than dividing measures, are demanded by such a state of things. So far from disapproving of the object, which some parties have set before them in the present day as the great thing to be aimed at, namely, the restoration of union, harmony, and peace, amongst all the sections of the Christian Church; the Author conceives it to be the very highest object presented to Christian faith and charity, in connexion with the church's temporal existence—an object which the Redeemer himself presented to the Father in his last intercessory prayer, before he suffered in the flesh, when he said, "that they all may be one, as I, Father, am one with thee, and thou with me; that they all may be perfect in one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and that thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." At the same time, is it not one of the most practical questions of the present age, and probably of ages to come, *how* this object may be realized? Is a mere meeting together of representatives from the various communions of the Christian church, while those communions themselves are practically separate from one another, all that is included in it? Is mere confederation unity, or a necessarily genuine symbol of unity? Is the oneness which Christ desires to see embodied, local, territorial,

national, earthly? Is it not rather spiritual, consisting in the universal diffusion of an identical faith without admixture of error—of hope without fear—of love without dissimulation? Is it possible for any great amount of real union to exist—such union as shall approve itself to Him who searches the heart—while there is a greatly multiplied variation in doctrine and discipline, temper and demeanour? Can the desired union be brought about by any action from without, in the mere combination for a season of large bodies of Christian men? Does not the union and harmony of the various portions of a plant, as a living whole, depend upon the circulation of a vital element, uniform in its nature and operation, throughout the whole? Whatever may be the importance of a charitable, peaceful, forbearing spirit, is this in itself adequate to the accomplishment of the desired end? Supposing that the profession of a desire for union amongst all parties were more general than it is; supposing that there were a genuine movement amongst all the members of all the sections of the Christian church towards a common centre, for the purpose of presenting to the world an aspect of unity; might not the world still ask if that unity were real—if it were anything more than mere display—if the various combining parties were really united on other occasions in all the common operations of denominational life? And supposing that such a question, asked under such circumstances, could not (probably enough!) be answered in the affirmative, what step would be needful on the part of the church, in order to satisfy a keenly scrutinizing world that a real union of all the members of Christ's body is not merely desirable, but also capable of being realized? Would it not be found needful *then* to inquire into

the real causes of sectional division? and would not a sincere and wise inquiry discover that, so long as revealed institutions and principles were departed from—so long as human expedients were substituted for Divine arrangements, it would be impossible for the various sections of the church to approach each other, except for purposes of display on public occasions? If it were possible for all parties to be brought to acknowledge as much as this, would not the necessity remain of discussing the very topics now brought before the Christian public; only with the possibility of producing fresh divisions, without any probability of their being speedily healed, in consequence of the disappointment of previous expectations? But all this is advanced on the supposition that a very general union of parties, for purposes of inquiry into the causes of difference, is a possible thing: may not this be a matter of very grave doubt? Has any plan of union been yet proposed with such an avowed object? or, if proposed, to any extent realized? Have any concerted operations been hitherto conducted, by parties whose relation to the universal church is more considerable than that of a few drops to the ocean? Do not the various denominations of Christendom, at the present time, appear to be separated from one another by walls of partition almost as strong, if not quite so high, as that which divided the Jew from the Gentile? Is not the distance between the Protestant and the Romanist almost as wide as possible? and whilst Romanism has her myriad variations under the semblance and theory of unity, has not Protestantism her variations also, without such semblance and theory?—What can be done in this lamentable state of things? Is a measure of union, necessarily partial, and between parties who ac-

tually differ from one another, capable of producing any very extensive change? Finally, is there not a book of *revelation?* and does it not speak in the name of God? Does it not discover the Divine will in respect to the organic principles of the Christian church, as well as in respect to doctrinal faith? May it not be the case, that the divisions of the church have been caused by a departure from that word? Nay, do not the inquiries collateral to our very subject teach us that such is the fact? And if so, do not the preliminaries of unity appear to be essentially connected with a return to scripture, and a fresh discussion in a calm and kindly spirit of scriptural principles? Must not the way of return to a primitive unity be the very converse of that which originally led to division? If the sheep of Christ's pasture, scattered abroad upon the mountains of separation, are ultimately to be brought back into one fold, must it not be by an universal return to the common centre from which they originally dispersed? Must not the way of return be clearly seen, before it can be entered upon? and is it possible for any very extensive union to take place until this is effected? The main object of the present work is to contribute some humble assistance to this very desirable end.

With respect to the *third* point, it is admitted that the temper of the present age is somewhat practical: calling for deeds rather than words. But is this a desirable state of things? Does it imply that the generality of Christian men, in their various denominations, are firmly settled down on a basis of perfect conviction? Is it to be inferred that doubt has given place to certainty — scriptural investigation to enlightened knowledge—and the processes of inquiry to the energy of resolve? Is there no fear of returning

errors? Does no peril threaten a primitive faith? Has heresy disappeared? Are the enemies of the truth all vanquished? Is anti-Christ annihilated? Can nothing more be done by words, to lead men to deeds—to vitalize them, and give them a permanently safe direction? Has the time come when it can no longer be said, "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned?" Has the period arrived when there is no need for the exhortation, "Hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus;" "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?" Is it not possible for deeds to be performed in a mere mechanical manner? and may not excitement, or the practical habits of a commercial age, call for and stimulate to apparently Christian deeds, where there is but little of enlightened Christian motive? Have not some periods in the history of the church exhibited deeds of great daring, self-denial, and suffering, apparently in the name of Christ, when there has been as little as possible of the knowledge and diffusion of genuine Christianity? Were not the crusades against the Saracens on the one hand, and the Albigenses on the other, real deeds, and for avowedly Christian ends? Is not the Church of Rome now, and has it not been in every age, the most abundant in deeds—of a certain kind? And does it not become us, therefore, knowing these things, to be very careful lest, in the blind performance of deeds, there should be a departure from scriptural faith and scriptural principles, for the purpose of imparting which, Divine words have been pronounced and recorded, and for the purpose of fostering and perpetuating which, human words, echoing the Divine, have been ordained? We cannot do without words! They are the very life of action

—the very sinews of energy—the very guardians of truth! The great Head of the church Himself is revealed and known amongst his own disciples as the Word! The last command which he gave to His own apostles had reference to the word—in preaching and in teaching the truths He had communicated. In every age of the church, right words have been more powerful to accomplish the gracious purposes of God than any other kind of human instrumentality. They are capable of bearing in them, as mysterious vehicles, the spirit of the Infinite and Eternal, and of bringing that spirit to operate upon the souls of men. And if an age of activity, which is at the same time an age of division and of threatening error, is to be wisely directed and brought into a state of conformity to the will and designs of Christ, that end can be accomplished by words alone—words spoken and written—words truthful and powerful, rebutting error, attacking superstition in her strongholds, and leading men back to primitive doctrines and primitive institutions, in order that they may be brought to Christ.

On these grounds, then, it is thought that the opinion expressed at the commencement of this preface is not sound—is anything but sound—is indicative of an altogether erroneous view of the way in which the church is to be purified and enlightened, and the world to be saved. A conciliatory spirit is always right; but the truth as it is in Jesus is never ill-timed. The paramount question is—*Has God revealed His will to man? and does that revelation determine the principles according to which Christians are to unite together for purposes of worship, edification, and the ultimate evangelization of the world?* If so, it can never be an unseasonable thing to illustrate those principles, and call the

attention of those who have never known, or who have departed from them, to their real character and authority. If not, let such an opinion be shown by those who hold it, that both the church and the world may know how greatly the former has been deluded! The Author is one who believes in the former position, and seeks to give expression to the strongly-cherished convictions of his mind. He believes that, in this age of excitement and agitation, of diversity of opinion and of conflicting parties, the great thing needed is *positive* truth, and truth positively *Divine*. If any one thinks that he has it, it is his duty to bring it forward and submit it to the attention of the world. With *conciliation*, in reference to principles, truth has nothing to do; while *compromise*, in reference to principles Divinely revealed, is treachery to God. A mere stripling, divinely directed, slew with a sling and a stone Goliath of Gath; and the smallest and apparently weakest party, acting with faith under the same direction, may be enabled to accomplish the overthrow of the most gigantic and inveterate errors.

The Author commends the present work to the attention of the Christian world, with the fervent prayer that it may be rendered instrumental, in however humble a measure, to the confirmation of those who are already attached to the great principles of Christian liberty in all the extent of their operation as revealed from heaven; and to the production of sound convictions in the minds of those who have not as yet learned to appreciate them.

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THE

HISTORY OF THE REVIVAL AND PROGRESS

OF

INDEPENDENCY IN ENGLAND.

INTRODUCTION.

BOOK I.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY IN THE AGE OF CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY EXPLANATIONS.

CHRISTIANITY is the last revelation from God to man. In the sublime language of the Apostle, it is "God speaking to us by his Son." Distinguished from all former revelations by its completeness in respect to the Divine character and purposes, it is not only the interpreter of all previous revelations, but in its own nature final. The Jewish religion in all its provisions anticipated a Divine manifestation, which should illustrate their meaning; the Christian religion contains within it that manifestation, and makes no promise of anything further or clearer for man in his present state.

As Judaism was an introductory system, it was confined to one out of the many nations of the earth; but Christianity, being a complete and perfected system, was designed for the whole world. The inferior economy which contained the "shadows of good things to come," needed not an universal enforcement; but the "good things" themselves are of such a nature as to concern the entire human race.

The object of the Christian revelation is, in fact, to restore mankind to God. The simple but sublime end which it proposes is to show how God, as the

supreme Ruler, and Father of the human family, has made arrangements by which the guilty can be restored to his favour, without detriment to his righteous government.

This end is accomplished, in so far as the revelation is concerned, by two classes of means—doctrines and institutions. The former are intended for man, considered as a spiritual being; the latter for man as a social being also. Were man a purely spiritual being, the former only would be needful in order to his salvation; but inasmuch as he is a tenant of flesh, and related by earthly ties to his fellow-mortals, the latter are of the highest practical moment.

The subject of the present work has to do with the latter of these two classes of means, and is one the importance of which has been felt more or less in every age of the Christian church. In the present day it is not only receiving revived attention, but is being investigated by many minds of the highest order, by sounder methods than have hitherto been used. The appliances of modern criticism are developing new truth in relation to it; and in proportion as the great results attending its elucidation are more distinctly seen, it is probable that it will become increasingly the fertile subject of study and discussion in forthcoming years.

Not, however, that it is of any importance in itself. The value of Christian institutions is wholly dependent on the Christian doctrines to which they are related, and for the purpose of exhibiting, preserving, and diffusing which, they have been revealed. As the ritual of the Mosaic institutions would have been unmeaning and worthless apart from the spirit of prophecy that breathed through them, so the insti-

tutions of Christianity are unmeaning and worthless when they do not serve to embody the spiritual life derived from Christian doctrine. The jewel gives importance to the casket; "the life is more than raiment."

The great end of Christian institutions is to exhibit, conserve, and propagate Christian doctrine, as divinely appointed channels in which the water of life is to flow, or as divinely prepared soil in which "the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations," is to flourish. Evangelical doctrine, or the doctrine which developes the gospel plan of redemption in all the variety of its adaptations to man as the subject of the Divine government, is the one hemisphere of Christianity; the apostolic institutions, or the practical observances and duties binding upon man in all the relationships of the present state, as enjoined by the Apostles, constitute the other hemisphere of Christianity. Both together include, as in a perfect orb, the whole of Christianity,—"the new world that grace has made."

We have said that our subject refers to institutions rather than doctrines. It is not, however, with all the institutions of Christianity that we have to do, but with that portion of them which relates to the constitution and government of societies of Christian men. It will be our business to shew what the apostolic institutions are in reference to this matter, how far they are obligatory, and to what extent their observance is subservient to the conservation and diffusion of Christian doctrine. In so doing we shall appeal to the written revelation as the only authority.

It is apparent from the nature of the case that our

subject depends for its satisfactory elucidation wholly on the testimony of the written Word. If the Christian religion relate to anything beyond the mere spirit and inward conviction of man—if it in any way touch man's social position—if it be intended to exert a diffusive influence in respect to the outward relations of human life—if, in an especial manner, it have anything to do with church government and organization—then this matter must be the subject of distinct revelation. To suppose otherwise is to suppose that the Divine Being has imposed an obligation, without indicating how he would have it discharged.

The following remarks from a modern writer are pertinent to the present topic, and worthy of serious consideration by all:—

"If the volume of the New Testament be really distinguished by those peculiarities of evidence which stamp it as the record of revealed truth, it irresistibly follows, from the very nature of such evidence, that it must possess that Divine character, to the utter exclusion of every other species of record or document which does not exhibit those peculiarities of evidence.

"According to all received or intelligible views of Divine revelation, this must necessarily be the case; without reference to any nicer distinctions sometimes raised, the very notion implies a broad line of demarcation. According to any conceivable idea of the word of God, it follows that its Divine supremacy must stand out alone, at an immeasurable and unapproachable distance from every thing else, however ancient or excellent, whether we take our position in the remotest antiquity, or in the opinions of the present day, or view it from one point of time or another, like a star without parallax.

"If the New Testament be a volume altogether *sui generis*, then all other writings and records, even of the earliest Christianity, must stand on wholly different ground. They can have nothing in common with it. Their proximity in age is no approximation, even the most distant, in nature or authority. In any conceivable sense of a revelation once for all vouchsafed, all subsequent differences of time utterly disappear. It is the precise nature of the written record that it puts all after ages upon a level. If there were a line drawn — a closing of the canon of inspiration— then no other remains even of the apostolic age can be of any comparable value. If there were a finality in the New Testament revelation, it follows that when we have ascended to the earliest and purest of the primitive writers, we are still no nearer to the Divine source of truth than among the theologians of the present day." *

These sentiments are ours. We can no more recognise the authority of man in matters of religion, than in matters of science. In both we have to ascertain the ordinances of God. What the volume of nature is to the student of natural science, the volume of inspiration is to the student of revealed science, or religion. To suppose that human authority can determine what is taught in respect to either, is equally absurd. The language of Bacon, applied in the first instance to nature, is also applicable to revelation. Man, "the minister and interpreter of nature,"† is equally the minister and interpreter of revelation. As in respect to the former, associations

* Edinburgh Review, No. 169, pp. 209, 10.

† "Homo naturæ minister et interpres."

of men can only help the individual student to form an independent opinion of his own; so, in the latter case, the opinions and practices of the church, so called, can only help an individual Christian to form an independent opinion in respect to Christian doctrine and duty. The ultimate appeal in both cases must be to *facts*, not human opinion, and every man must be for himself the final judge. When Galileo was imprisoned because he asserted that the world moved, an insult was offered to science in his person; but how many thousands and tens of thousands have been made to suffer for pursuing their own inquiries in respect to religion! The time will come when those who have commiserated the natural philosopher as a martyr of science, will regard with a deeper pity those silent, but not less noble martyrs, in whose persons religious science has been insulted in every age of hierarchical pretension.

Our appeal, then, in reference to the authority of those principles which we designate the principles of independency, is to the Divine revelation. If these principles are not to be found in the word of God, our cause must be abandoned. If they have not a purer origin than human invention or expediency, they must be set aside as not having claim even to a first hearing.

If, however, they are Divinely revealed, they can demand nothing less than implicit subjection. The practice of the church, in modern or in early times, can neither add to, nor detract from, their authority. The history of the church, in times posterior to Divine revelation, can in no way affect their claims.

In accordance with these views, we propose, in the following pages, to delineate the church principles of the New Testament, and afterwards to

shew how far, in periods succeeding the apostolic age, the professed churches of Christ have followed or abandoned them. The method thus adopted is identical with that followed by the inspired historians of the Jewish church. That church is not brought before us in the Old Testament, as developing itself age after age into newer and more perfect forms, as if it were first instituted an infant church by Moses, to grow up into manhood afterwards; but it is set before us as a community which received Divine laws and institutions in the first era of its existence, at the hands of its great and inspired legislator, which were perfect and final for that dispensation, and to which, therefore, nothing might be added by man. The post-Mosaic history of the Jewish church, as chronicled for us on the sacred page, is written on this hypothesis: it is not an attempt to exhibit new developments of the Divine will through the growing perfection of the Jewish people; but is a simple record of the conduct of that people in reference to an unchanging law of obedience and fidelity. "The law was given by Moses;" and the history of the Jews, from the death of Moses to its close, is a history of the manner in which that law was observed by the nation at large. The historical books of the Old Testament were not composed for the purpose of adding anything to the development of the Divine will contained in the pentateuch; but for the purpose of shewing how in successive periods the Jewish people departed from, or returned to, the *primitive* worship and obedience.

It is on the same principle that the history of the post-apostolic church should be composed. As the sacred chroniclers have never supposed that anything

might be added except by direct Divine intervention to the law which came by Moses, so the historian of the Christian church should never admit the hypothesis that anything may be added to the "grace and truth" which came by Jesus Christ, and were finally exhibited in all their essential aspects by his inspired apostles. All that the historian can do is to show how far men calling themselves Christians, and communities assuming the name of Christian churches, have adhered to, or departed from, the primitive doctrines and institutions of the apostolic age.

We are aware that it has been asserted by some that the New Testament contains nothing specific or positive in reference to our subject, and that Christ and his apostles have left the church without any rules for its guidance in reference to government and discipline. Whether this assertion be true we shall see as we proceed. In the mean time, our position is unaffected by the assertion, whether true or false. The New Testament contains *all* that is authoritative, whether little or much, on the subject of religion; and the history of the church can only show how far men have yielded, or refused to yield, subjection to *it*. Be it distinctly understood, then, that in tracing the post-apostolic history of independency, we have no thought of thereby corroborating the argument in its favour deduced from the New Testament. The orb of light which shines upon our path is the Divine word alone, and is "without parallax;" while merely human opinions, like terrestrial objects, have a variable aspect, according to the position from which they are viewed.

We are thus explicit in stating the principles on which the present work is written, because of the

many misconceptions which exist in reference to the lessons of church history. Too commonly our ecclesiastial writers have overlooked the fact of the immense interval between the divine history and the human. While some have passed with breathless haste over the inspired records of the apostolic age, making it only a first and brief stage in the progress of the church; others, inverting the true order of things, have gathered together the lessons which may be learnt from the human history of the church, in order to falsify those which are taught from the divine. Nor have more Christian historians kept their eye sufficiently single to the pure light which emanates from the sacred word, as a sure beacon to every age. Even in that popular and most invaluable history, which has recently been given to the world, this fault has been committed.* While in that work the references to THE WORD as the ultimate authority in religion are very numerous; they are, nevertheless, so scattered throughout the volume, as almost to lose their force in the general plan, instead of being gathered together at the outset, as the standard to which the church must be brought back in every reformation worthy of the name. When a traveller misses his way, he must retrace his steps to the path from which he deviated; but how can this be done, unless that path is known?

In the following work, then, an attempt will be made to place human history in its true position. Antiquity, however hoary, will not be permitted to lend any sanction to error; the want of antiquity will not be allowed to rob any principle of authority, if

* D'Aubigné's "History of the Reformation."

found in the Divine word. The merely human teacher, be he pope or priest, council or synod, will be placed on a level with every other teacher not inspired. The so-called catholicity of the church, in sentiments that are true, will be no more esteemed a proof of their truth, than the same catholicity in sentiments that are false. Those things which are to be believed and practised in the name of Christianity, are irrespective of human opinions, single or accumulated, of one age or of another. The only authority to which we dare submit our conscience, and to whose bidding we are willing to yield our souls, is that which exhibits divine credentials. When the stupendous alternative of final bliss or woe depends upon the complexion of our faith and practice, who or what will step for one moment between us and the authority that speaks IN THE NAME OF GOD?

A further statement respecting the precise bearing of the post-apostolic history of the church on the principles of Independency, will be made in its proper place, after the development of those principles in the ensuing chapters.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY; OR INDIVIDUAL INDEPENDENCY.

THE associated principles we now propose to consider, were gradually developed in the era of the Christian revelation. They might have been propounded at once in a systematic form; but this was not "according to the purpose of Him who worketh after the counsel of his own will."

It is not for man to prescribe the method in which God shall reveal himself; neither is it just to assume that God has not revealed his will respecting the constitution and government of his church, when we have a record in the New Testament of the manner in which that church was organized and governed under the superintendence of inspired Apostles. We must derive our knowledge of the institutions of Christianity from the same source as that to which we repair for Christian doctrines. The latter are not propounded dogmatically, as in a creed or confession: why, then, should we expect the former to be revealed in that way? In respect to both we must "search the scriptures." He who does so, will discover that, as the scattered doctrines of scripture may be gathered

together in a perfect and consistent system of truth, so the miscellaneous references to the church principles and practices of the primitive Christians may be collected in one symmetrical platform of ecclesiastical polity, suited to the genius of that spiritual and universal religion whose interests it is intended to subserve.

On comparing the institutions of Moses with those of Christ and his Apostles, we find a great contrast between them, but not greater than might be expected from the difference between the two dispensations of the law and the gospel. If this difference be observed, we shall find as much that is really authoritative in the institutions of the one as of the other.

Let it be remembered, for example, that the ceremonial law was for the most part typical or prophetic, and then it will be seen how necessary it was that every portion should be specific. Who but God could institute a prophetic ritual? The shadows of good things to come could only be painted by the hand of Him who knew what those good things were; and therefore every minute particular was authoritatively enjoined. The structure and furniture and vessels of the sanctuary, the priests and their order, their garments and their duties, the sacrifices and their kinds, and the times and manner, of their offering;—all these and many other matters, of the most trifling character, were given after the Divine pattern, from which no deviation might be made. When we know that all these things had a typical or prophetic meaning, for the sake of which they were enjoined, we cannot fail to see the necessity for their positive enforcement. The same may be said of those portions of the law which had a retro-

spective aspect. None but God could say which of the events in the history of his people should be religiously commemorated, and which not. Therefore the Divine commandment was given as to what should be done, by way of remembrance as well as by way of anticipation.

But under the present dispensation there is no need for the minute specification of ritual observances. There is nothing more to anticipate in reference to this world. The Father "*hath* blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus." The "good things" themselves have come, and what need any longer for the mere shadows of them!

It, however, by no means follows, that because a system of ceremonial observance is no longer needed, a system of principles may not be instituted. Neither are we hastily to conclude that because everything connected with religious observance is not minutely specified, therefore some prominent and important matters are not provided for. Yet further we are not warranted in saying that nothing is prescribed in the New Testament for the direction of Christian men in their social organizations, merely because the prescript is not formally delivered in the shape of a positive law.

We find from the New Testament record that the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are instituted in terms as positive as those which enjoin any of the ceremonial rites of Judaism; and although no temporal penalty is attached to the neglect of these ordinances (as was the case with respect to the neglect of Jewish ceremonial observances), yet they are generally, if not universally, deemed binding upon the Christian church, simply because they are instituted.

The same may be said in reference to some of the apostolic directions in the epistles delivered to the churches. Who can read those epistles without being convinced that there are *some* regulations, at least, which every church or congregation must follow, if the approbation of Christ is to be had? Is not great care taken, by Paul especially, to instruct the faithful in their duty as to the admission or non-admission of members to their fellowship? Are not certain characters described as unfit for membership? Is there not a positive command not to have fellowship with such? And if it be as we have stated,—if there be directions of this kind, shall it be affirmed without contradiction, (as it has been too often,) that there is nothing positive in respect to the government and discipline of Christ's people? Do our instructors in these matters want something more positive than an emphatic series of directions? Can they see no force in a rule, although delivered by inspired men, until it is connected with temporal penalties?

Again, in reference to official persons in the Church of Christ, whether ordinary or extraordinary, have we not repeated announcements respecting them and their kinds or classes, in the New Testament? Are they not spoken of as the special provision or *gift* of Christ? Is not their office amply described, either in the statement of qualifications essential to it, or in the record of conduct exhibiting the discharge of its functions? And if it be so, is not this enough? Can any thing more positive be needed by those who look for the mind of Christ in His own word? Are we here also to wait for threatened penalties before we allow these distinctly enunciated kinds and qualifications of office to be considered as binding upon Christ's people?

Lastly, are there not certain principles distinctly recognized, either by Christ or his Apostles, or both, in respect to the liberty which Christian men are to enjoy, whether as individuals or in their associated character? Will any man who has carefully perused the New Testament affirm that he can gather nothing, either in the shape of precept or implication, which will serve to show whether Christ and his Apostles sanctioned or forbade liberty of conscience, religious freedom, and the voluntary worship and service of God? Can it be affirmed that, so far as the mind of the Apostles can be ascertained from their recorded acts, and from their writings, it was, and, were they now living, would be, a matter of indifference to them whether Christ's people were religious vassals, and subject to human domination, or religious freemen, and subject to Christ and His word alone? Will it be said that no provision was made, no directions were given, adapted to preserve the people of Christ from worldly and secularising influences, and from human dictation, as it might be sought to be exercised by Christians over one another? If these questions can be answered only in such a way as shall confirm the position that much is either enjoined or implied tending to religious freedom, what more can be needed to show that the mind of Christ is positively revealed in respect to such a matter? Shall we again look out for penalties before we yield obedience to the King of Zion?

It is apparent, then, that there are positive institutions still. Christ has not left his people without laws. The Apostles have not left the Churches without directions in respect to the great principles on which they shall act, whether in their individual or associated character. Our guide is still with us. Our

standard both of duty and privilege is before us. It is our business now to show what we believe to be the teaching of the New Testament, in respect to those principles which constitute the great bulwark of Christian liberty in every age, and which we designate the principles of religious Independency.

The first principle of Independency regards the individual, and may be thus expressed:—EVERY INDIVIDUAL IS INDEPENDENT OF HUMAN AUTHORITY IN ALL MATTERS PERTAINING TO RELIGIOUS FAITH AND PRACTICE.

This principle is fundamental,—the root from which the other principles grow, and of which they are only a further development. If Christ and his Apostles are considered as the foundation of the Christian Church,* this principle provides that every member of that Church shall be built upon it alone. It denies human authority, in order to enforce Divine.† It puts man out of the way, that the sinner may believe in Christ, follow next to Christ, obey Christ. It does not discard human assistance, but it will not permit that assistance to swell out into authority. It admits all benevolent agencies, whether for the edification of the Church, or for the evangelizing of the world; but it refuses to lend its sanction to such agencies when they are clothed with human authority instead of bringing to Divine authority; when they lead away from Christ, or beyond Christ, to any thing human.

This principle has no exceptions. It lies at the basis of all religious independency; no other development of independency must subvert it; nothing may violate it. It is the blade: the ear also may grow;

* Eph. ii. 20. † Eph. iv. 23—26.

but it must grow out of the blade, not to destroy, but as a natural development of it.

This principle is essential. There is no vital Christianity without it. It cuts up, root and branch, every principle of human authority in religion. When legitimate officers of the Church violate this principle, they depart from the genius of the gospel as much in kind, as illegitimate officers of the Church. Deacons, teachers, pastors, who violate this principle, depart as much from the genius of the gospel, as arch-deacons, priests, archbishops, patriarchs, exarchs, patrons. cardinals, primates, popes. Like its author, it pays no respect to persons.

This principle recognises the majesty of the human soul, as a real unit of intelligence and responsibility in the universe. It echoes the language of Him who said, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mankind had almost forgotten their own immortality, and consequently the immense difference between their spiritual and temporal interests, when He who came to seek and to save "that which was lost," revived a truth that was eternal, and made it the foundation of all his teaching. In every age there is a tendency to forget this truth; and the political, ecclesiastical, social, municipal, domestic organisations of this world contain elements more or less antagonistic to it. When men become gregarious, they are apt to overlook individual responsibility; and when power is exercised, during any length of time, in coercing men to obedience, the thought—the very thought of independence comes to be looked upon as strange and criminal.

The New Testament, however, has recorded the judgment of the Great Founder of Christianity on

this subject; as well as that of his inspired representatives—the Apostles.

To whichever of the gospels we turn, we shall find the Great Teacher addressing men as men, having souls which to each of them were an infinite concern. He commenced his instructions amongst the multitudes, not the rulers of earth, either civil or ecclesiastical. When he went forth, proclaiming the great truths of his kingdom, he passed by the fountains of human law and justice, appealing to men as the subjects of an infinitely perfect government, and not as the subjects of any earthly rule. He bade the river of water of life flow in all the lowest places first, often leaving the highest ground dry; nor was it until the waters had accumulated that the high places were reached. "To the poor the gospel is preached," was an indication of the genius of his religion. Magistrates, rulers, princes, were not excluded from the Divine provision; but they must come to it on a level with all the world besides.

He was, indeed, the true Prophet for man—speaking not for one race or age, but for all time. His words fall upon the ear in harmony with the voice of universal nature, and touch the awakened spirit softly as the fanning breeze, and gently as the blowing clover or falling rain, or powerfully as the rolling thunder or the raging storm. When he reveals the new, it is with the simple majesty of one to whom it is ever old. Heaven is manifestly with him and around him; and to approach the thrice-hallowed presence of the Eternal, is but entering his Father's house. Nay, man though he be, and one with us, that frame of his, so delicate, and so subject to all the changeful experience of suffering humanity, is the temple of the

Highest, and he, its tenant, is one with the Eternal. How full of comfort to the heavy-laden to know that this Divine Teacher is for all—that no monopoly was ever sanctioned by him in the things that enrich and ennoble man's spirit—that, as God sent his Son into the world to save the world, so he came to teach, to give, and to save freely, without money and without price, opening the door of heaven's mercies with his own hand, and bidding the whole world enter there!

If Christ had designed mankind at large to be instructed through the medium of constituted human authorities, he would have revealed himself first to the world's governors and rulers, enjoining it upon them to teach their subjects the doctrines and duties of His religion. By overlooking all political and earthly distinctions existing between man and man, and addressing himself to all as on a common level, and to every individual as the responsible agent for his own spiritual welfare, He taught the world and the Church the great principle of personal independency.

To enumerate all the particular instances in which Christ thus addresses himself to men individually, in such terms as are sufficient to convince the world that He regarded each man as free and independent in every thing pertaining to conscience and religious duty, would be to extract the greater portion of his recorded sayings.

We refer our readers, therefore, to the four gospels, and request them to notice the following things:—1. The direct appeal which Christ makes to his hearers. 2. The absence of all announcements which in any way sanction human interference with the religious convictions of men. 3. The cautions frequently given respecting the influence of worldly fears in re-

spect to the opposition of rulers and men of authority to those who would act consistently with their religious convictions. 4. The distinction which Christ makes between the things of God and the things of Cæsar. 5. The emphatic manner in which He forbids ambition and domination amongst His followers. 6. The prominence which he gives to the soul of man, and its salvation, in comparison with every thing merely temporal. 7. The stern manner in which he rebukes every thing approaching to bigotry amongst his professed followers. 8. The tendency of his instructions to liberate men from all prejudices derived from human teaching. 9. The manifest design of Christ to draw all men to himself alone, as the only Prophet, Priest, and King over his disciples. 10. The prohibition of all methods of convincing and converting men excepting such as were suitable to the free exercise of reason and conscience.

In these and other particulars, Christ lends his sanction to the principle we are now endeavouring to establish. It is evident to all who read the simple record of his ministry, that he designed every man to judge for himself, and that no power was delegated by him to any of his servants, by which they might lord it over the individual conscience of any, even the meanest of his followers. Who can contemplate Christ as a Teacher, whether, on his mountain throne, or in his after intercourse with men, addressing the multitudes gathered around him, and pronouncing his benediction on mankind at large, according to their moral classification, without perceiving the universality of his religion? Does the glorious sun preach to man, without distinction of nation or person?—so does He. Do the flowers bloom for every eye that will behold

them? Does the music of the winds breathe for every listening ear? Do the circling seasons visit, in their turn, every portion of the peopled world?—So do Christ's words suit themselves to the general ear and heart of humanity; and every man must interpret their meaning for himself as words that contain the "spirit and the life" that are adapted to renovate and save the soul.

It might naturally be expected that the principle, so clearly implied in the Redeemer's teaching, would be enforced only more fully by his Apostles. When the Spirit was poured out upon them, to lead them into all truth, it was mainly for the purpose of bringing all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them. "He shall take of mine and shew them unto you," was the Saviour's promise.

Accordingly, the Apostles are very explicit in asserting the same principle. While they urge the authority of Christ upon the submission of every human being, and their own apostolic authority as His inspired representatives and delegates, they most carefully exclude all others from the very pretension to such claims. Human authority in religion, whether protruding from the world into the church, or inwardly developing itself amongst the faithful, they unequivocally condemn. Refusing to submit their own conscience to domination, they also enjoin upon every man the duty of preserving inviolate from foreign intrusion the temple of God within.

In their preaching, whether before Jew or Gentile, they appeal to the Divine authority alone; and as their Master before them claimed implicit obedience from every one who heard him, directly, and without waiting for any sanction from either civil or ecclesias-

tical rulers, so did they. They asked no human government for permission to preach the truth; and they never desisted from preaching the truth when human governments, whether powerful or petty, sought to arrest them in their peaceful embassy from the court of heaven. Their real position in respect to the rulers of this world was well expressed by their own language on a critical occasion — "We ought to obey God rather than man."* Their appeal was to every individual, and they commended themselves to "every man's conscience." "I have a message from God to thee," might have been the very terms of their intercourse with every person coming within the sound of their voice. In this procedure they acknowledged the right, and enforced the duty, of every one to judge for himself in religious matters, and to act on his own exclusive responsibility. "Unto *you* is the word of this salvation sent," was a declaration which imported that the Author of the Christian religion recognised every man as accountable for the complexion of his own religious character, and therefore as virtually the final arbiter of his own eternal destiny. No wonder that when such grave responsibilities pressed upon all men in their individual capacity, they should be often cautioned to take heed how they listened to their religious instructors.†

As in their first approaches to a sinful world, so in their intercourse with such as became their spiritual converts, the Apostles unequivocally asserted and acted upon the same principle. Not only did they permit men to be the judges of their apostolic credentials, but

* Acts v. 29.

† Col. ii. 8, &c., 16, &c. Eph. 4. 13. Gal. v. 1. 1 John iv. 1, &c.

after their testimony was received as the result of independent conviction, they carefully abstained from lording it over the disciples and Christian believers, as if they had any personal claim to subjection. What they as Apostles enjoined, was to be complied with at the risk of the Divine displeasure ; but only because, and in so far as, they were Christ's representatives, and manifestly clothed with his power and authority. None other might dictate to the believing people. When, in the course of time, believers came together and were associated in Christian fellowship, the human infirmity and sin of domination, which Christ so earnestly repressed amongst the apostles themselves in the days of their pupilage, quickly developed itself, and Christians sought to prescribe for one another's faith and practice. But the Apostles nipped this evil spirit in its first buddings, and have left their sentence of condemnation on record — a sentence, at the same time of liberty for man in all the onward progress of his character and condition as the member of a religious community. If the declarations, "every one of us must give an account of himself to God,"—"every man shall bear his own burden," were not sufficient to indicate the independent responsibility attaching to every individual believer, the apostles are seen moving amongst the churches with more explicit statements to the same effect — statements suited to the peculiar circumstances of domination that presented themselves to their penetrating glance. "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled with any yoke of bondage." * "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." † "Let

* Gal. v. 1. † Rom. xiv. 5.

no man judge you in meats or drinks, &c." * "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth." † "Believe not every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God." ‡ "Not that we (even *we*, though apostles) would have dominion over your faith; but are helpers of your joy." And if a difference still existed between believers in respect to matters of importance, the principle to be observed was, "Let as many as are agreed follow the same rule, mind the same things."

Thus boldly and broadly was this first principle of Independency laid down, both by Christ and his Apostles. There is nothing to the contrary. It is without exception and without limitations. The rule is *absolute* in respect to all matters of religious faith and practice. He who knows not this, knows not the first and fundamental principle of religious duty and privilege. It is the only principle compatible with an intelligent recognition of the nature of religion itself. To act from any other principle in religious profession and observance, is not only to wear the badge of spiritual bondage; it is derogatory to the Divine character, and a voluntary surrender to man of that which belongs exclusively to God. §

* Coloss. ii. 16, &c. † Rom. xiv. 4. ‡ John iv. 1.

§ "We can conceive," says an eloquent writer, "that a man may abandon to an external authority the direction of his material interests, and his temporal destiny. But when it extends to the conscience, the thought, and the internal existence, to the abdication of self-government, to the delivering oneself to a foreign power, it is truly a moral suicide, a servitude a hundred-fold worse than that of the body, or than that of the soil." Guizot's "History of Civilization in Europe." Lecture VI.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY; OR CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY.

THE first and fundamental principle of Independency, as explained in the last chapter, is manifestly of such a nature as to be of perpetual obligation. The religion of Jesus Christ in all its entireness, is to be embraced by individual believers on the sole ground of its Divine authority. Whatever, therefore, may be the outgrowth of individual faith, and whatever may be the relations subsisting between one Christian and another, or between one Christian society and another, this first principle is still to be regarded as inviolable. It comes first, not in priority merely, but in relation to man, as a spiritual unit whose eternal destiny is entirely dependant upon the manner in which his personal duty to God is discharged. Christianity might have been so communicated as to require submission from men in their individual capacity only; if, therefore, it undertakes to regulate the social relations of believers; if it prescribes a form of social organization, we may rest assured that it will proceed on principles not subversive, but conservative, of that which is fundamental. As the personal salvation of men is

the great end for which the gospel has been revealed, everything additional will be rendered subservient to this. The external envelope will be so constructed, as to preserve that which is of greater importance and enshrined within it. The development of the heavenly plant, however diversified, will tend to the nourishment, not the destruction, of that vital element which has its primitive seat in the root. If every individual believer has been constituted a king and priest in his own right, with whose independent acts of self-government and worship none may authoritatively interfere, excepting him who is King of kings, and High Priest of our profession, then this individual kingship and priestship to God will never be invaded by anything additional in the after development of Christian obligations. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose that God gives and takes away at the same time; that liberty and bondage are compatible terms of service; that ONE only may be master, and yet that there may be MANY masters;—is, to convert principle into expediency, and divinely-harmonized institutions into discordant arrangements. God *is* able to bring light out of darkness, and good out of evil; but He cannot be the *author* of both.

It is a matter of Scripture record, that the early Christian converts living in the same locality came together, in the first instance, and became associated. This was natural.* It was the result of sympathy. Having the same faith and hope, and being worshippers of the same true God, they necessarily felt an

* "The form of the Christian community and of the public Christian worship, the archetype of all the later Christian cultus, arose at first, without any preconceived plan, from the peculiar nature of the higher life that belonged to all true Christians. . . .

interest in one another's presence and fellowship. This natural association was sanctioned by Christ and his inspired apostles, and constituted a means of edification and mutual Christian helpfulness.* It was, however, at the same time brought under the special supervision of the apostles for purposes of organization, that it might not, on the one hand, become detrimental to the individual independency of those who were associated; and that it might not, on the other, be connected with arrangements leading to the invasion of its own essential liberties. If Christianity was to be exhibited in a social or congregational capacity, it was manifestly important that this development of its influence should be regulated by something more fixed than human expediency, lest the more important development of Christian influence in the individual should be checked through the infringement of individual liberty, either directly by majorities or official persons within the community, or indirectly by such a constitution of things as should admit of foreign interference.

It is also a matter of Scripture record, that in some of the primitive churches, individual members and parties attempted to bring the consciences of other members into subjection; and were *reproved* for so doing. The apostle Paul, in particular, gave emphatic instruction on this subject, as we have already seen, placing all Christians within the church, however

The power of the newly awakened feeling of Christian fellowship, the feeling of the common grace of redemption, outweighed all other personal and public feelings, and all other relations were subordinated to this one great relation."—Neander's "History of the First Planting," &c. book i. ch. ii.

* 2 Cor. viii. 5. Owen's Gospel Church, p. 75.

associated in any given locality, on a footing of perfect independence, and subject only to Divine authority in matters pertaining to conscientious observance. However associated, and however diversified their gifts, all were reckoned the servants of Christ alone, and whenever one member sought to obtain dominion over another member's faith and practice, the question, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant," checked the unlawful invasion.

But it was also needful that the Christian society should be so constituted in its *external* relations as to preserve its own liberties. However scrupulous the members *within* might be respecting the independence of each unit of the body, all would be in vain unless the society itself were preserved from foreign interference. Considered in a practical point of view, it would matter little whether individual liberties were invaded and subverted from within, or from without the community. Both sources of danger, therefore, were most carefully to be guarded against. We find accordingly that provision was made, in the apostolic institution of Christian fellowship and organization, in both respects. This provision we designate the second principle of independency, not as opposed to, or essentially distinct from, the first; but as a development of it, and in order to shield it from injury in a wider sphere of operation, arising from the new circumstances into which individual believers are brought through association with one another.

This second principle of independency regards the congregation, or local association of believers, and may be thus expressed:—EVERY CONGREGATION, OR LOCAL CHURCH, COMPOSED OF CHRISTIANS MEETING IN ONE PLACE, IS INDEPENDENT, INTERNALLY AND

EXTERNALLY, OF ALL HUMAN AUTHORITY IN MATTERS OF RELIGION.

This principle is *one*, inasmuch as it respects the congregation or society, as distinguished from the individual. From the terms, however, in which it is couched, it is evidently required to be considered in a two-fold aspect—as affecting the congregation internally and externally. We shall therefore treat it under each view separately, for the purpose of affording a lucid exposition of its nature and import.

Some remarks, however, are needful in reference to the principle considered as a whole.

It should be observed, then, that while the first principle of independency regards men individually, this regards men as Christians associated together upon some common basis of fellowship and organization. In order to obtain a just view of the precise character and extent of this fellowship and organization, we must bear in mind (what we have already advanced respecting individual or personal independency,) that in apostolic times Christians were regarded in a two-fold point of view—as independent Christian men, scattered over the whole world and in no sense united by any visible relations or ties; and, secondly, as members of the local associations, congregations, or churches, which, on account of proximity, they had joined. Under the first aspect, Christians were regarded by the apostles as open to all the influences of truth, when accompanied by Divine credentials, quite irrespective of the locality in which they might reside, or of the opinions of their fellow-Christians. Under the second aspect, Christians were regarded by the apostles as members of the Christian community congregation or church in the locality, formed for

purposes of fellowship and social worship. Regarded in the second capacity, their first capacity was neither annihilated nor impaired: it was only improved upon by the agency of blended sympathies and mutual service, derived from fellowship and association. If in their first capacity, no authority might be exercised over them, excepting such as was manifestly Divine; so, in their second capacity, no authority might be exercised over them, excepting such as was manifestly Divine. The relation subsisting between Christians in the local community or church was to be of such a character, that each Christian should still be for himself the final judge of truth. They were still to call no man "master" but Christ; they were not to judge one another in matters pertaining to conscience, but to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, edifying one another in love. In their first capacity, they belonged to the universal church—"the general assembly and church of the first-born written in heaven"—as those who had been "begotten again from the dead unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ," and were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." They were "God's husbandry," not man's; they were "God's building," not man's. The kingdom of heaven was "within" them; not "with observation," not "of this world;" but spiritual, invisible, and Divine. Hence they are either addressed or spoken of as "elect," "saints," "called to be saints," "faithful brethren," "holy brethren," &c. In their second capacity, they did not depart from the prerogatives of their "high calling;" but being joined to such as were distinguished by the same lofty and holy charac-

teristics, voluntarily and without any degree of compulsion, they were still to be considered as Christ's freemen, and the new relations on which they had entered, were intended to subserve their mutual edification in all that distinguished them as individual Christians. If there was a difference between these two capacities, it was not one of contrariety or opposition. In point of order and importance, the first was first, and the second subordinate to it. Nothing arising out of the second was to subvert or contravene that which was essential to the first. To present "*every* man perfect," was the design of the entire system of instituted means, and the local association was of importance, not in itself, but because it was to be rendered conducive to the perfecting of the several parts. Thus the whole body, fitly framed together, and compacted by that which every joint supplied, was to make edification of itself in every part, and to grow up into Christ, its living Head in all things.*

In confirmation of these views, we appeal to the practice of the apostles, and of the churches acting under their inspired superintendance. That Christians were regarded as members of an universal family, connected by *spiritual* ties alone, is evident from the frequent manner in which reference is made to them in this general capacity. Nor is the fact less apparent from the circumstance that more than half of the apostolic letters are addressed to Christians without respect to their local associations.† That Chris-

* Ephes. iv. 15, 16.

† *e. g.* Rom. i. 7.; Ephes. i. 1.; Coloss. i. 1.; James i. 1; 1 Pet. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1.; 1 John; Jude.

tians were also regarded as members of local churches, is no less evident, from the epistles addressed to particular churches, and from the minute details respecting the history of some of the early churches in the Acts of the Apostles. From these authentic records we learn that the first churches were composed of Christian men and women, who entered into a voluntary association with one another under the direction of the apostles; and that in no instance were the associations any other than local, or such as might hold their assemblies in one place. The general mode in which they were designated was—"the congregation or church of God, in" or "at" such a place; while other terms were employed to express the idea of their characters, such as "saints and faithful brethren," or "called to be saints," or "elect according to the will of God," &c. In no case do we find any mention of the church *of* a place, but always *at* or *in* a place. In no case do we find any mention of "the church" of a district, province, or nation; but always "the churches" of a district, province, or nation.*

These scriptural *data* are in accordance with the general principle of congregational independency, now under consideration. The importance which attaches to them is derived from the uniform testimony they afford to the practice of the apostles. Nothing can more unequivocally express the method of apostolic procedure than the uniform tenor of apostolic practice. If they had been guided by no fixed plan, as some have asserted, in the planting and organizing of churches,

† Neander's History of the First Planting of the Christian Church. Biblical Cabinet, vol. i. p. 169.

we should discern this want of plan in their conduct. But is it so? Can a single exception be found to the rule we have specified? Every church was congregational only. There is no exception. What other inference can be drawn from this singular fact—a fact worth more than a thousand volumes on the subject, composed by the hands and elaborated from the heads of uninspired men,—than that the apostles acted according to a Divine rule, and that this rule is binding in every age. It is true that we may sometimes learn as much from the omissions as from the statements of Scripture: Let this very grave omission of all reference to *extra-congregational* churches in the New Testament be taken into candid consideration. Let it be considered in connection with the many direct references to the existence of purely congregational churches, formed and superintended by the apostles; let it be considered that both omission and statement point to an uniform law of procedure during the apostolic age; and then let it be asked how any can affirm that no rule has been prescribed for the regulation of Christian fellowship?

So far from this, the apostles followed one unvarying method in every period of their ministry. They were all of one mind in reference to this subject. There is not a hint of the slightest difference amongst them, either in opinion or practice. That there were points of contrast in their natural, moral, and religious character, we know. If, then, they were left to themselves to decide upon the method by which Christianity should develope itself amongst men in their social relations, is it not natural to conclude that they would have adopted different methods, according to their peculiar predilections? Or, if they determined to

act in concert, should we not have heard of their consultation respecting a point upon which so much would depend? And if they were not perfectly assured that they had "the mind of Christ," should we not have received some hint respecting the experimental character of the first churches and their organization, with directions to the entire body of Christians in after ages to improve upon the plan which in the judgment of inspired apostles seemed best suited to the genius of Christianity? But we are too grave in our treatment of those who think the apostles followed and instituted no rule in reference to this subject. The pen of a Pascal or of an Erasmus would be more fitting here than that of a mere expounder of scripture truth.

It should also be remembered that this apostolic principle was applied indiscriminately to all Christians, in every locality, and during the entire period of the apostolic ministry. If one method had been adopted amongst the Jews, and another amongst the Gentiles; if the people of one nation had been organized after one plan of church order, and the people of another and different nation after another; if Christians inhabiting cities and places of large resort had been brought under one class of regulations, and the Christians inhabiting the villages under another class of regulations; then we might have concluded that the apostles laid down no general and fixed rule, but left the practical question of church organization to be settled by views of expediency, as the fluctuating and ever shifting condition of human affairs might dictate. But it was not so. The apostles overlooked all distinctions of place, and people, and circumstance whatsoever. Their language was, "So we ordain in

all the churches." The platform on which they erected the structure of church order and observance was regenerated human nature, not the conventional distinctions of time. As Christians were "new creatures in Christ Jesus," where there was "neither Jew nor Gentile, Scythian, barbarian, bond, nor free, but Christ all and in all," so, wherever there were Christians, kindred elements were in existence from which to construct a uniform system of social organization. Hence, as a matter of fact, the churches *everywhere*, during the apostolic age, were local, congregational, and independent.

CHAPTER IV.

CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY CONSIDERED INTERNALLY.

HAVING considered the second principle of Independency generally in the last chapter, we now proceed to a more minute examination of its development in the apostolic age, under the twofold aspect of internal and external. By the internal independency of the local or congregational church, we mean its internal organization on such a plan as to secure all real power for purposes of self-government in the hands of its members; by the external Independency of the local or congregational church, we mean its absolute independence, as a society or congregation, of all authority emanating from without itself. We shall enquire into the former of these two aspects of the general principle in this chapter, reserving the latter for the next.

In order to secure the internal independence of a church, the apostles have made ample provision, both by their institutions and their recorded instructions. For example—1. They have exhibited the object or design for which the local church or congregation is to exist—namely, mutual edification and usefulness. 2. They have enacted laws respecting the

means by which that design is to be accomplished; more particularly in reference to the admission and exclusion of members—the relief of the poor—the visitation of the sick—the observance of Christian ordinances and worship—and the appointment, support, and functions of church officers. 3. In addition to this, they have placed the power of practically interpreting and enforcing these laws in the collective body constituting the church. To have stopped short of this, would have been opening the door for that domination within the church which might prove subversive of the individual and collective liberties of the body. It would little matter what laws they propounded for the government of the Christian community, if such an ultimate power as this were not given to those who composed it. We find, therefore, that while in reference to doctrine every Christian member was to be the final judge of that which might be preached,* in reference to discipline and the appointment of officers, the church at large in its collective members, was to be the final judge. To enter into minute detail in reference to all these points, would occupy too much space. We shall, however briefly adduce the evidence in respect to each for the satisfaction of the reader.

In reference to the *first* point, little need be said. The spontaneous gatherings of the first Christians at Jerusalem—their recorded acts of fellowship, worship, and liberality—the similarity between their first religious meetings and those held afterwards amongst the converted proselytes at Antioch, and the converted Gen-

* Col. ii. 4—10, 16, &c.

tiles at Corinth and elsewhere—the apostolic instructions given to the churches, in the epistles addressed to them on the subject of their church fellowship and organiz.tion (Rom. xv. 2; 1 Cor. i. 10, xi. 12, 27, xiv. 14, 26, 40; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Gal. v. 14, 15, vi. 2; Eph. ii. 19—22; Col. iv. 16; 1 Thess. iv. 9), are sufficient to show that, in the mind of the apostles, the churches or congregations were formed for the ends we have specified.

In reference to the *second* point, we shall refer to those portions of the New Testament in which the apostolic laws are either given or implied.

The following passages respect the admission, exclusion, and restoration of members, most of them being addressed to the churches in their collective capacity:—Acts, ii. 38—47, iv. 4, v. 32, ix. 31, xi. 22—24, 26, xvi. 5; Rom. xiv. 1, xvi. 1, 17; 1 Cor. v. 9—11; 2 Cor. ii. 6, 10; vi. 14—18; Gal. vi. 1; Col. iv. 10; 2 Thess. iii. 6.

The following refer to the relief of the poor and sick:—Acts, xi. 29; 1 Cor. xvi. 1—3, 14; 2 Cor. viii. 1—4, ix. 1—15; Phil. iv. 14; 1 Tim. v. 3—16; Heb. xiii. 16.

The following touch upon the point of Christian fellowship, ordinances, and worship:—Heb. x. 24, 25; James ii. 1—4, v. 16; 1 Pet. iv. 8; &c.

The following relate to the appointment, support, and functions of officers:—Acts, vi. 1—6, xiv. 23, xx. 17, 28—32; 1 Cor. xii. 28—30; Eph. iv. 11—16; Phil. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. v. 27; Tit. i. 5—9; Acts, xiii. 1—3, compared with Acts, xiv. 26, 27; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18; Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Pet. v. 1—7.

We shall refer again to the last particular, and

therefore content ourselves at present with the list of passages in which the law respecting office is given.

In reference to the *third* point, or the power of the local church to govern itself as the seat of supreme power, we must observe that we do not intend to convey the idea that every member was made a ruler, or that certain officers were not appointed, whose functions consisted in government of a certain kind—a matter to which we shall refer more explicitly in another place;—but we mean that the supreme power was conferred upon the church at large in its collective character. In support of this view, both omissions and statements in the New Testament concur. In the first place, there is no recorded instance of a congregation or local church being deprived of the power to choose its own members and regulate its own affairs. In the second place, there is little reference to officers of churches, in comparison with the references to the churches themselves, both in the record of their transactions and in the epistles addressed to them. In the third place, there is no instance of officers receiving instructions to consider their authority superior to that of the churches amongst whom they ministered. Fourthly, the instructions given to officers imply that their office was to be by and not against the consent of the church, collectively considered. Fifthly, the power given to the church at Jerusalem to choose its own deacons—the fact that the church at Antioch was, by the Spirit, made the means of sending forth Paul and Barnabas on a special embassy—the circumstance that all apostolic instructions to the churches were given to them directly, and not through any intermediate

party*—and the subordinate prominence given to officers in comparison with churches — show that the churches held the first place in the mind of the apostles, and possessed the supreme power. On these and other grounds it appears to have been according to the Divine plan to make the congregation or local church internally independent. Other views, confirming the above, will be adduced in the course of our observations respecting the much-disputed point of officers in the Christian church, which we now proceed to investigate.†

The question respecting officers, although important, is not so important in itself as in its bearings upon the other question of congregational liberty. Little, comparatively, is said in the New Testament respecting it, because it was considered subordinate to more important matters. What is said, however, is sufficient to indicate the mind of the apostles in reference to it. It might be predicted, without prejudice to the question as to what particular officers were appointed, that their functions would not be such as to subvert the liberties of the Church; and in the general question, the presumption will be in favour of those offices which best harmonize with the principles already laid down. If, for example, the very idea of a Pope is at variance with the principle of congregational independency, the presumption is so far against it. Not less so the idea of a diocesan bishop. Not less so the idea of an extra-congregational presbytery, council, or

* Neander's Hist. of Christian Religion, &c., Rose, vol. i. p. 193.

† See Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., Bib. Cabinet, vol. i. p. 170, for an able paragraph in confirmation of these views.

conference, invested with power to manage the Church's affairs with authority over its members. Not less so the idea of a single minister or a plurality of ministers within the Church,* having power over it. As in reference to church organization generally it has been determined, from what we have already seen, that it shall not violate the principle of personal independency; so, in reference to officers, it may be presumed beforehand, that their functions will not be such as to infringe upon antecedent rights and privileges.

This point is so simple and self-evident, that it can hardly need illustration. Practically, however, it has been much overlooked in questions of this nature. The discussion has too often proceeded upon the meaning of mere words and phrases, instead of being shaped according to those general principles which ought ever to be kept in mind in disputed points of this nature. Just as in the question concerning the value of good works, everything depends upon the previous question, which respects the grounds of a sinner's justification before God; so in this, everything pertaining to office in the church depends upon the view previously entertained respecting personal and congregational Independency. We cannot, in the former case, suppose that justification by faith *alone* is the Divine method of justification, and that good works also may justify before God. Neither can we, in the latter case, suppose that every Christian and every Christian community is to be independent of all human authority, and yet that an order of officers may

* Owen's Gospel Church, p. 40.

exist either within or without the congregational Church, with authority to contravene such individual and communal rights. Liberty and bondage cannot be dispensed at the same time to the same parties. God is not the God of confusion, but of order. We find accordingly, that neither by Christ nor his Apostles were any parties invested with authority to exercise domination over the churches of Christ. On more than one occasion, the Redeemer checked the rising spirit of pre-eminence amongst his apostles; setting before them the example of Gentile rulers, who were fond of their authority, as a pattern which they were most carefully to avoid. "It shall not," said he, "be so amongst you." And as Christ laid the foundation, so did the apostles afterwards build upon it. Although, as apostles, they spake with the authority which they derived from Christ, yet they never advanced any personal claims to pre-eminence. One of their number emphatically disclaims all pretensions to such authority, saying, "Not that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy."

Undoubtedly there are passages in the Epistles to the churches, and in the Acts, which imply that there were officers in the churches who had a certain kind of government and rule over the local church. The question, therefore, is—What *kind* of rule or government was conferred on these officers? Was it over the church in its collective capacity; and if so, to what extent? Was it over the individual members composing the church; and to what extent? We know that a pure republic may have officers invested with governing powers, as in Athens of olden time, or

as in the United States of America in our day.* It is quite possible for certain individuals to be entrusted with executive power for specific ends, not subversive of the general government in the collective body of the people; and from the New Testament records it appears that the official government in the early churches was of this character only. It was expressly forbidden to become a lordship over faith in the individual members composing a church: it was also quite compatible with the existence of a higher than official power lodged in the assembly of the faithful. That this was the constitution of the particular offices held in the early churches, there can be no doubt.† While the members, separately considered, were to be subject to their leaders, rulers, &c., the rulers were responsible to the members collectively, and were amenable to them for their conduct. Their office was not so much personal as moral; and submission to them was not as if to them, but to the truth which they dispensed, and the order which their functions subserved. It was not a political government, authoritative and connected with the awe of physical power; but a spiritual and moral government, the success of which was wholly dependant on the character, knowledge, and Christian prudence of those who exercised it.‡

* "They (*i. e.* the officers of the Church) were not destined to be unlimited monarchs, but rulers and guides in an ecclesiastic republic, and to conduct every thing in conjunction with the church assembled together, as the servants and not the masters of which they were to act."—Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., Rose, vol. i. p. 193.

† Mosheim, Neander, &c. ‡ Owen's Gospel Church, p. 29, 30.

exist either within or without the congregational Church, with authority to contravene such individual and communal rights. Liberty and bondage cannot be dispensed at the same time to the same parties. God is not the God of confusion, but of order. We find accordingly, that neither by Christ nor his Apostles were any parties invested with authority to exercise domination over the churches of Christ. On more than one occasion, the Redeemer checked the rising spirit of pre-eminence amongst his apostles; setting before them the example of Gentile rulers, who were fond of their authority, as a pattern which they were most carefully to avoid. "It shall not," said he, "be so amongst you." And as Christ laid the foundation, so did the apostles afterwards build upon it. Although, as apostles, they spake with the authority which they derived from Christ, yet they never advanced any personal claims to pre-eminence. One of their number emphatically disclaims all pretensions to such authority, saying, "Not that we would have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy."

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† Mosheim, Neander, &c. ‡ Owen's Gospel Church, p. 29, 30.

With respect to the kinds of officers appointed to have a permanent place within the congregational church, we find that they were two, and two only. Apostles, evangelists, and prophets, were not congregational officers at all. Apostles were general or universal officers, or, as Mosheim terms them, "extraordinary teachers," to whom all were bound to render subjection, on account of their inspired character.* Evangelists were temporary officers, intended to supplement the labours of the Apostles,† acting under apostolic direction, and moving from church to church, or from one district to another, according as they might be sent by the apostles. Prophets,‡ if they can be termed officers at all, were raised up only for a season, to instruct and warn and animate the churches in their early history.§ These three classes of officers, then, had no permanent place in the local churches.

The permanent officers were bishops or presbyters, and deacons. It appears, on a careful investigation of the matter, that the former were designed to take the general oversight of the congregational church, in all that conduced to the perfecting and advancement of their spiritual interests; while the latter were designed to subserve the same spiritual interests, by attending

* Chrysostom, in the third century, calls them "governors or presidents of the whole world"—*τής οίκουμένης προςτασίαν . . . τὴν οίκουμένην ἅπασαν κυβέρνων.*—Homilies on 1 and 2 Cor. Clarkson's Select Works, p. 142.

† Gieseler's Compendium of Eccl. Hist. Foreign Theol. Lib. vol. i. p. 93.

‡ Rom. xiii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28.; xiv. 3, 29. Eph. iv. 11. Acts, xxi. 9, 10.

§ Neander's Hist. of the First Planting of the Christian Church, book i. ch. ii. Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. i. part ii. ch. ii. sec. ix.

to matters of a secular character in connection with the operations of the body. The former presided over the assembly as its regulators, moderators, guides, leaders; but always in accordance with Christian laws and not by virtue of any personal authority. They taught from the Holy Scriptures what they thought to be the mind and will of God, in respect to doctrine and duty; and for this purpose their abilities and gifts were supposed to qualify them.* They were also (not at first, but afterwards, by express provision) freed from secular duties, in order that they might give themselves wholly to the study and explanation of the Word of God. These, and other necessarily springing out of these, were the special duties pertaining to their office. The deacon's office, inasmuch as it was for the spiritual welfare of the church, was to be fulfilled by such as were qualified to occupy it with a spiritual apprehension of its design; but the duties themselves were secular, such as distributing alms to the poor, visiting the sick and needy, attending to all things which pertained to the temporal comfort and provision of the church in its congregational capacity.

While many names were employed to designate the spiritual office and its functions, such as "pastors and teachers," "shepherds," "rulers," &c., two names appear to have been most commonly used, viz. "presbyters" and "bishops," the English terms corresponding to which are *elders* and *overseers*. How it came to pass that both names were applied indiscriminately to one and the same persons we propose to show.

The reader will bear in mind that the Gospel was

* 1 Tim. iii. Titus, i.

first preached, and Christian churches were first formed, amongst the Jews. It was not until after many years that the Gentiles were invited to embrace the offers of the Gospel. When, therefore, the spiritual officers were first appointed amongst the converts of the Jewish people, it was quite natural to designate them by a term already in use amongst the Jews, giving that term a peculiar signification accordant with the design of the Christian office, to which it was applied. The term *presbyter* was this term. The leaders or rulers of the synagogue were termed presbyters; perhaps on account of that superior knowledge, character, and influence, which generally attach to age. This name was appropriated in the Christian church on account of its suitability, as descriptive of the office instituted in it. This suitability would be even more striking in the earliest days of the Christian church than afterwards; inasmuch as in the new state of things the elder men, generally speaking, would be the best fitted to sustain the spiritual office. Thus the origin of the term presbyter in the Christian church is easily accounted for.

To go beyond this, as some have done, and affirm that the Christian church was formed after the *model* of the Jewish synagogue, is more than is warranted by the facts of the case, and seems derogatory to the free and independent spirit by which the church was originally constituted. There were certain elements in the organization of the Jewish synagogue which were in accordance with the social development in general; and, therefore, there may have been a similarity between the constitution of the Jewish synagogue and the constitution of the Christian church; but it is not necessary to suppose

that the latter was derived from the former.* It is much more natural to suppose that both, in so far as they were similar, were derived from the fitness of the peculiar organization to the end to be accomplished through it. Moreover, if there was similarity between the Jewish synagogue and the Christian Church in some things, there was great dissimilarity in others;† leading to the inference that the one was not derived from the other, or formed after the model of the other, but that both had an independent basis, which happened to be in some things similar, in consequence of identical social ends.

We are led then to the conclusion that the name of presbyter or elder was employed in the first period of the Christian Church, because it was the most suitable term that could be used to designate a religious office amongst a people who were by nature Jews.‡ For many years—that is, so long as Christianity was confined to the Jews—the term presbyter alone was employed. No other was needed. It accomplished its purpose effectually. Every body understood what parties were referred to, when they were spoken of as "the presbyters or elders" of the Christian congregation.

But when Christianity was propagated, and Christian churches were planted amongst the Gentiles, the

* "It may be disputed whether the apostles designed from the first that believers should form a society exactly on the model of the synagogue."—Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., vol i. p. 34.

† Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., book i. chap. ii. Coleman's Antiquities, &c. chap. i. sec. 3.

‡ Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. Rose, vol. i. p. 186.

word presbyter was not sufficiently significant. Unaccustomed to the peculiarities of the Jewish worship and institutions, except where Jewish colonies existed in their midst, and even then very imperfectly acquainted with the private and religious affairs of the Jews, unless some of their number had become proselytes, the Gentiles would not derive from the term *presbyter* the idea which it was needful for them to have in respect to the parties sustaining the spiritual office in the Christian Church. As words are of use only when understood, this word would be of little use when standing alone, unexplained. It was in accordance with the genius of a religion so free and elastic as the Christian, to adopt other terms beside the old ones, in order to express its social provisions, wherever they were needed.

It so happened that a term was in use amongst the Greeks, which not only expressed the idea of office, but which more nearly suited the peculiar character of the spiritual office in the Christian Church than the term presbyter. The term presbyter, as we have already seen, was a name derived from age and a supposed corresponding experience and fitness, and was adopted only because it was familiar to the Jew in connexion with office over an assembly of the people. It did not to any one who was not a Jew express any thing more than age, and rank arising from age. Now the term of which we speak as in use amongst the Greeks, was descriptive both of the office and of its peculiar functions, that is, it might be used either as a mere name of the office to which it referred, or as a verb or participle in describing the peculiar functions themselves.

This word was the word *bishop*, or overseer. It

was not only in use in Attica to describe, "those who were commissioned to organize the states dependant upon Athens," but appears also "to have been a frequent one, for denoting a guiding oversight in the public administration." * Homer, Aristophanes, and Demosthenes, use the word in the general sense, as a name of office. Cicero, in one of his epistles to Atticus, speaks of Pompey as desiring him to sustain the office of bishop, and refers to it as common throughout a large province of the Roman empire. The Greek commentator on Aristophanes explains the word as applied to those who were sent from Athens into the cities subject to it, to oversee or inspect their public affairs; adding that they were called by the Athenians, bishops and guardians, but by the Lacedemonians, harmosts or adjusters of public matters. In the fragment of an old work by Arcadius Charisius, the same name is applied to those public officers who presided over the bread and produce, used by the people for their daily food.

With such a term in common use amongst the Gentiles, more particularly in the Roman empire, it was natural for the apostles to adopt it, either by way of substitution or explanation, for the old term presbyter, as being more suitable to designate the office of the spiritual leader and ruler in the Christian Church. Accordingly we find that as Christianity spread in the Roman empire, and amongst the Greek colonies of Asia Minor, the name bishop became substituted for, or connected with, the name presbyter. We have no intimation in the Acts of the Apostles, that any other name than pres-

* See Neander's Hist. of the First Planting of the Christian Church, vol. i. p. 167, 8; and the article Επισκοπος in all the Lexicons.

byter was used, so long as the gospel was confined to the Jewish people; but from the same inspired record we learn that when churches were formed amongst the Gentiles—such as had been heathen idolaters, and were ignorant of Jewish religious customs—the word bishop was used as well, and probably, in some places, more frequently than the term which it was employed to explain.

The first time in which we find the word bishop thus used, according to the inspired record of the Acts, was when Paul at Miletus sent for the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, the stronghold of Grecian idolatry. He charged the *presbyters* of that Church to take heed unto the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them *bishops*.* From this time, if not before, the two names were used interchangeably as descriptive of the same thing. Sometimes the one is used, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both together.

This explanation of the origin of the two names in the Christian Church is so simple and satisfactory, that it is wonderful how any, in after times, could have had any other opinion than that they apply to the same office. There are only two reasons

* Acts xx. ver. 28, where the word "overseers" in our version ought to have been rendered "bishops." "That the name also of episcopus was altogether synonymous with that of presbyter, is clearly collected from the passages of Scripture, where both appellations are interchanged (Acts xx. compare ver. 17. with ver. 28; Epistle to Titus. ch. i. verses 5 and 7), as well as from those where the mention of the office of deacon follows immediately after that of "episcopi," so that a third class of officers could not lie between the two. Philipp. i. 1; 1 Tim. iii. 1—8. *This interchange* of the two appellations is a proof of their *entire coincidence*." Neander's His ory of the Christian Religion, &c. Section ii. 1; Rose, vol. i. p. 188.

for the conduct of those who have endeavoured to substantiate the position that the bishop and presbyter were two distinct orders — first, a blind partizanship arising from educational and ecclesiastical prepossessions; and secondly, ignorance of the fact we have referred to in explanation of the origin of the two names. Church writers have generally been men practically connected with ecclesiastical systems which have embraced the three orders of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, and hence have been prejudiced in favor of an opinion countenancing their own practice. They have been dogmatical, however, on the subject, in proportion as they have felt the weakness of the Scriptural evidence in favour of their views. With all their learning they have never been able to explain how it happens that Paul, in the passage we have referred to, calls the presbyters of the Church at Ephesus, bishops; * how it is that he should again, in his Epistle to Titus, call the presbyters bishops, using the one term as identical in its official meaning with the other; † how it is that Peter should exhort the presbyters to exercise their office of bishop willingly, &c.; ‡ and how it is that in the Epistle to Timothy,§ and in the Epistle to the Philippians,|| bishops and deacons alone should be referred to, if there were a class coming between the bishops and deacons, to whom the name of presbyter was applied. The advocates of three orders have never been able to explain these

* Acts xx. 28.

† Titus i. 5 compared with 7.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 1, 2; where the words "taking the oversight" should be rendered "exercising the office of bishop."

§ 1 Tim. iii.

|| Phil. i. 1.

matters. Their ingenuity has been exhausted on the subject in vain: still the case has stood out clearly against them in the pages of the New Testament. The facts have proved too stubborn to suit their particular views. Separate the presbyters from the bishops as they would, they come together again, coalesce, and become one class, and one only, whenever the appeal is carried from human tribunals to the infallible one of the written Word.*

At the same time we think that the case is made very much clearer by the explanation we have given of the origin of the two names of office.

In drawing this chapter to a close, the reader will observe that we have treated of details, only when needful in order to the establishment of our position respecting the internal independency of the congregational Church. We have dwelt somewhat at length on the question respecting the names of the spiritual officers of the Church, because the abettors of hierarchical power have ever sought to distinguish between the presbyter and the bishop, in order that they may distend the office of the latter to dimensions commensurate with their own pretensions. If, however, we we had not been able to make it clear that both names appertained to one class of officers only, it would still have to be shewn that the modern lordly bishop of a diocese, was in any way related to the simple congregational bishops of the New Testament.

Let it be understood, then, that the officers of the first churches were of two kinds or classes only—spi-

* Neander's History of the First Planting, &c.—Bib. Cab. vol. i. p. 168, 169. Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 88. Coleman's Antiquities, chap. iii. sec. 7.

ritual and secular; and that both were subservient to the edification of the congregational church. That in any church the spiritual officers were distinguished from one another by any marks of gradation, is more than can be ascertained from the records of the New Testament; * and if exhibited in connection with any symptoms of hierarchical domination, was directly opposed to the sweeping rebuke of the Saviour, when he contrasted the supremacy which worldly men sought after with the humility and equality, amounting to mutual subjection, which ought to exist amongst all his followers, and especially those who were to be patterns to the flock.† It could not be that in the churches of Christ any office should be sanctioned not compatible with the design of the associations themselves.

From all that has been advanced it is apparent that the question of office in the Church of Christ is quite subordinate to that of the liberty or independency of each several society. The entire spirit of the apostolic institutions is against the idea of magnifying office of any kind. The church or congregation—its prosperity, liberty, edification, usefulness—is put foremost

* The question of ruling elders has been the subject of much discussion. Neander, however, has shown that the elders or bishops were all rulers, and that the gift or ability to teach was not at first absolutely needful, in order to being an elder or bishop. While the apostles were the chief teachers, and extraordinary gifts were bestowed on prophets and others, it was not so needful that the elders should have the ability to instruct as to govern the churches; and when there were many elders or bishops, some might devote themselves to one department of the pastoral office, and some to another, without the necessity for a rule or order distinguishing one elder from another. See, also, Campbell's Ecc. Hist. sec. vi.

† Mark x. 42—45.

in all the inspired records of the primitive age. To designate the Church of Christ universally, or the churches of Christ in any locality, by words and terms connected with office, is to evince a departure from the Scriptural view of the relation existing between the church and its officers. To speak of this portion of Christ's people as *the Episcopalian Church,* and that portion as *the Presbyterian Church,** because of certain views respecting office, betrays the prevalence of a wrong idea respecting the Church itself. Why should the servant give his name to the family? Officers were made for the churches, not the churches for officers. Why should that which expresses at most only a limited portion of the church's being, be put prominently forward as if it contained the whole? Are bishops or presbyteries the church? If, in order to remove misconception, it is necessary to add distinguishing terms to the simple ones of *Church* and *Churches of Christ,* let those terms be suitable to the prominent Scriptural idea of the paramount claims and authority of the churches themselves, beyond those of the official persons whose functions are intended to be subservient to their prosperity. Let the *sovereignty* of Christ's people, and the *independency* of Christ's churches as communities over which no human authority may have dominion, be selected as the prominent idea to be conveyed through the medium of ecclesiastical terminology.

* Of course the term *Popish church* (which is never used) would be yet more significant of departure from the Scriptural idea of the church of Christ. The phrase *the Roman Catholic church* avoids the objection in the text, but is a contradiction in terms. How a church can be Roman (*i. e.* local) and yet Catholic (*i. e.* universal), it is difficult to conceive.

CHAPTER V.

CONGREGATIONAL INDEPENDENCY CONSIDERED EXTERNALLY.

HAVING seen, in the last chapter, that the congregational churches of the New Testament were internally independent, admitting no element subversive of the collective power or individual liberties of the members, we now proceed to show that the same churches were *externally* independent. By this we mean that every church was an independent society, containing within itself all the authority and power requisite to the management of its own affairs, and admitting of no authority *foreign* to itself, under any form whatsoever.

It should be observed that we speak of authority only. We do not deny that there was intercourse, and sympathy, and reciprocal love between the churches; but this was never in any case connected with authority or power exercised by one church over another, or by any number of churches over any individual church, or by any representatives or officers of any church or churches over any of the independent societies. We do not find in the New Testament any recorded case of congregational subjection to any party without the congregation; of course, always excepting the apostles and such parties as were appointed by them, and acting under their immediate authority. We do not find any recorded

case of *synodical* power in any shape whatever. Whatever heresies, disorders, evils, may have existed at any time (and that such things did exist in some of the churches is distinctly stated)—whatever need there was for the reformation of abuses and corruptions (and that there was such need there can be no question)—we meet with no recorded instance of foreign interference exercised over any church whatsoever. More than this—there is no intimation, instruction, direction, in any part of the apostolic writings, implying that any other party than the members of the congregational church itself were to rectify any disorders within it. In the Corinthian Church, for example, there was much that was wrong; but that church was called upon to exercise its own power in applying the necessary correction. In the seven churches of Asia Minor, there were many proofs of spiritual defection; but no party was authorised to interfere with them: each church was required to exercise within itself such salutary discipline as might alter the state of things. And it is true, in general, that although the apostles had very positive knowledge, and gave very emphatic warning, of errors, heresies, schisms, and disorders, which should arise in the churches, either before or after their decease; yet they never gave any directions which could possibly lead the churches to infer that other means than those divinely instituted in each church would be needful to set things in order. The idea of church *supervision* by the delegates, or representatives, or officers of the churches in any district, province, or nation, never meets us in any of the apostolic writings. Synods, councils, conferences, extra-congregational presbyteries, having *authority* over any number of churches, have

neither place nor sanction in the practice of apostolic times. The only intercourse between the churches of those days was that of friendship, sympathy, Christian love, and kindness. There was much union, but it was of the proper kind. When one church could assist another by pecuniary aid, it was promptly rendered; when the members of one church left their own neighbourhood, and came into that of another, they were cordially welcomed; when any church was called to special privation or suffering, the other churches deeply condoled and sympathized, as being members of the same body of Christ. But never did any church invade the rights and liberties of another; neither was it supposed that a number of churches had any power to exercise domination over the members of any one church.

It was obviously of essential importance to preserve this external independence for each congregational church. Without it the internal independence of the church would be but a poor guarantee for either congregational or individual liberty. In a parallel case, the civil liberties of a people may be provided for by their own constitution and laws; but of what avail would such a provision be, unless the people, in a national capacity, are independent of foreign control? The laws of England, for example, aim at securing the liberty of the subject; and that they do so as effectually as the laws of any country, is the boast and glory of our land. But what meaning would there be in such a boast if England herself were not free? Let France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, or any other foreign state, have an admitted right to interfere with our internal affairs, of what avail were our constitution and laws? While the laws of our land recognize for their chief end

the liberty of the subject, this absolute independence of the nation is essential to their practical efficiency.

The principle is the same in reference to a Christian society or congregation. External independency is essential to internal independency; while internal independency is essential to individual independency. To give a congregation or church the *sole* power of managing its own affairs, is the only guarantee that the members composing it shall enjoy their liberties. It is not disputed that a foreign authority might, under certain peculiar circumstances, be exercised co-ordinately with that of the local church; but, on the other hand, it cannot also be disputed that, if it be an authority, it might, under other circumstances, come into collision with that of the local church—might eventually sway and undermine it: just as a foreign state having an admitted right to interfere with British affairs, might at one season refuse to exercise its authority, for prudential reasons, and at another season might exercise it co-ordinately and consentaneously with that of our British rulers; but, if the right of interference be admitted, might, under other circumstances, exercise it in direct hostility to our national interests, and prove our ruin. We may not be without apprehension respecting the subversion of our liberties, whilst our own rulers exclusively are over us; even under such circumstances, they need to be watched most vigilantly and jealously by the public eye; but how abject our condition if we had continual reason to apprehend the contingency of foreign interference as well! The mode of reasoning is the same in reference to the liberties of a Christian congregation: these liberties may not be always free from peril when fenced round by the provisions of an

internal independency; but how much more so than if exposed to invasion from constituted authorities without the congregation itself!

It seems incumbent on us to notice, in this place, what has been deemed an exception to the absolute rule we have laid down—an exception which has often been appealed to in post-apostolic times, in justification of synods, and conferences, and councils, and dogmatical interference with the independent rights and liberties of Christian congregations. We refer to the so-called "first council" at Jerusalem, of which we have a minute account in the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Before stating the real facts of the case, let it be observed that it is the only one appearing even to sanction the violation of the principle of congregational Independency, although many and subsequent opportunities presented themselves for settling controversies and points of order by the kind of authority alledged to have been recognized by the institution of such a council as the one composed of "apostles, presbyters, and brethren" at Jerusalem. This meeting was held in a comparatively early period of the apostolic era, and certainly before the idolatrous Gentiles had been called to embrace the gospel. It is not alledged that any such council was ever held before; and the circumstance that no other was ever held afterwards, during any period of the apostolic era, notwithstanding the corrupt practices of the church at Corinth, and the prevalence of error and heresy in many of the Gentile churches, is somewhat singular, if indeed the surmise of its being a *council* at all, in the ordinary sense of the term, be not a great and glaring misapprehension of the entire case. So far from adopting

the principle which some have discovered, or fain would discover, in this Jerusalem assembly, as a principle of synodical authority amongst the churches of Christ, the apostles in no instance set it before the churches as an example of this nature—in no instance give any directions which have the remotest tendency to establish it as a precedent.

On a careful examination of the case, it appears that the much-vaunted council was nothing more than a meeting of the Independent Church at Jerusalem, held for the purpose of satisfying the inquiries of the Independent Church at Antioch, respecting a matter of fact in which both churches were concerned.*

The church at Antioch was composed of those who, before they embraced Christianity, had been proselytes of the gate; and some parties, proceeding from the church at Jerusalem, had come amongst them urging the duty of complying with the whole law of Mosaic ceremonial, in order to their being recognized as Christians. The question which the church at Antioch transmitted to the church at Jerusalem, or the apostles and elders who represented it, referred to a matter of fact, namely, whether the church at Jerusalem took that view of their duty, and sent forth the Judaizing teachers in their name. The circumstance

* Mosheim's Eccl. Hist., cent. i. p. ii. ch. ii. sect. 14. Note—"The meeting of the church of Jerusalem, mentioned in the 15th chapter of the Acts, is commonly considered as the *first Christian council*. But this notion arises from a manifest abuse of the word *council*. That meeting was only of one church, and if such a meeting be called a *council*, it will follow that there were innumerable councils in the primitive times. But every one knows that a *council* is an assembly of deputies or commissioners, sent from several churches associated by certain bonds in a general body: and therefore the supposition above-mentioned falls to the ground."

that Paul and Barnabas could not set the matter at rest, and were sent to Jerusalem to make inquiries, is sufficient to show that the question was one not of *authority*, but of *fact*. Had the false teachers not come from Jerusalem, and in the assumed name of the church there, no appeal would have been made to that church. That Paul and Barnabas did not repair to Jerusalem as representatives of the church at Antioch, with full power to express their opinion, is evident from the fact that the church at Antioch was divided on the question of duty, and from the further fact that when they came to Jerusalem and joined the assembly, they did not give their judgment on the general question, but merely declared "what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." That the meeting was not synodical, or œcumenical, (*i. e.*, composed of delegates or representatives of a number of churches, or of the aggregate churches of Christ) is evident from the fact that no other church than that at Antioch sent messengers to Jerusalem, although the question concerned many other churches in "Syria and Cilicia," composed, like the church at Antioch, of proselytes of the gate. At the same time, the fact that the meeting at Jerusalem was composed of apostles *and* others—that the matter was *debated* in the presence of the apostles—that the apostles appealed to *Scripture* and known facts in reference to the will of God, and not to their own inspired authority—that the final declaration, opinion, or judgment, went forth in the name of "the apostles, elders, and brethren"—and that Paul and Barnabas had no voice in the decision, but were only admitted to the assembly as inquirers, and for the purpose of bearing witness to what God had done among the Gentiles;—all these are abundant proofs that the question had been referred

to the church of Jerusalem, to be determined by them in their congregational capacity, and by them alone.

The apostles, who, from the commencement, had been specially connected with the church at Jerusalem, acted on this occasion as on many others (for they were Christian men as well as apostles) in their capacity as members of the church. When they spake as inspired men, communicating the will of God by revelation, they never joined to themselves other parties, as if their authority could be shared by others. As in former days *one* prophet was sufficient to declare with authority the will of God to Israel, so now one apostle, presenting the credentials of an apostolic mandate, had authority sufficient to command the subjection of the Christian church. The question agitated in the church at Antioch, had been settled by authority long ago. The difficulty of the present case arose from the Judaizing teachers, who had made use of the venerable name of the church at Jerusalem in enforcing their impertinent dogmas on the Antioch Christians, and from the existence of a number of partizans in the Jerusalem church, who, when the question was mooted, sided with them in opinion, saying "that it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses,"—thereby causing the general question to be debated, as well as the particular one respecting the unauthorised conduct of the Judaizing teachers.

If further information be needed on this subject, it will be found in the appendix.* The points upon which we have touched are sufficient to show that the so-called council was nothing more than a congregational church meeting of the Christians at Jerusalem,

* Appendix A. for the opinions of Neander, Gieseler, Barrington, &c. on this subject.

the special object of which was to resolve the doubts of their fellow-Christians at Antioch, occasioned by some false brethren of their own number, who had used their name without authority. As the Jerusalem church was the first and mother church, from whose members the word of the gospel first "sounded forth to other regions," it was likely that any opinions or practices emanating from it would have great weight in determining the opinions of other churches. Just as in every age, a church which becomes the instrument of evangelizing its neighbourhood, and thereby of forming other churches, would be looked up to with special veneration; but in proportion as the truth prevailed, with nothing more. Hence the anxiety of the Christians of Antioch to know authoritatively what the opinion of the church at Jerusalem was in reference to this matter. The very terms, however, in which that opinion was given, shew that the word of God was the ground on which it was formed,. "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost (*i. e.*, as ascertained by the Scriptures to which Peter and James referred in their speeches), and (as a natural consequence) to us. (*i. e.*, the apostles, elders, and brethren), to lay upon you no other burden than these necessary things (*i. e.*, necessary inasmuch as the law of Moses for proselytes of the gate, mentioned in the seventeenth chapter of Leviticus, was still binding upon them, until the final and visible abrogation of the Jewish polity and religion, which took place at the destruction of Jerusalem) that ye abstain from," &c. It is evident, from the tenor of this letter—so simple, so brief, so Scriptural, so free from all assumption,—that the opinion, grave and conclusive it might be, but still the *opinion* only of the apostles, elders, and brethren of Jerusalem, was given.

Our position, then, remains untouched. The churches of the apostolic era were to all purposes independent. Apostles giving proof of their apostolic authority, and evangelists, acting under their direct injunctions, were the only parties who could interfere with them in matters of faith and practice. Teachers and preachers coming into the neighbourhood of any of the churches, were to be tried and tested, and if the truth was not found in them, they were not to be received. Of any other parties seeking domination over the faith and practice of the early churches, there is no mention. Of any rule or direction, emanating from apostolic authority in reference to synodical and representative power, which should regulate the affairs of the churches, or any number of them, there is no hint even. Many as were the divisions, and schisms, and heresies, and corruptions of those days, no such expedients as those of later times were ever devised or attempted by which to subjugate the liberties of congregational churches, and through that of the individuals composing them, under plea of reducing all things to uniformity and order. If it be asked, how and why was this? we can discover only one answer,—and, would that it were heard and responded to once more throughout all the churches of Christendom, unloosing the fetters by which so many are bound, and reducing things in Christ's kingdom to their original standard and pattern!—that the genius of Christianity forbids every thing tending to bring the souls of men into bondage, and tolerates the incidental evils arising from the corruptions of human nature, rather than sanction any system, which, in the name of order and uniformity, superinduces mere mechanical regularity and spiritual death. Could the

ghosts of all the ecclesiastical synods, councils, conferences, extra-congregational presbyteries, that ever had being, be brought into the presence of the simple church meeting of the mother church of Jerusalem, by *it* to trace their origin and parentage, how would they skulk off one by one into limbo as they discerned the hideous contrast between the pretensions on which they were called into existence and by which they were afterwards worked, and the simple principle of *free Christian association* of which the Jerusalem meeting was only a development!

CHAPTER VI.

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE OF INDEPENDENCY; OR, AGGREGATE INDEPENDENCY.

THE second principle of independency, or the independency of the Christian congregation, internally and externally, is now to be regarded as a part of the Scriptural development of the constitution of Christ's kingdom. That principle we hold to be of essential importance, as the nearest approximation to a safeguard over the liberties of a Christian people which infinite wisdom could devise, and, at the same time, only a natural development of the law of human association in its purest form.

This principle was intended to be universally adopted and inviolable. It was instituted as the rule. Nothing contrary to it was ever enjoined, enforced, exemplified in the apostolic age. No testimony can carry us farther than this. If nothing more was done in that age of institution by inspiration, if every community of believers was constituted a self-governing body, if every church without exception was local, congregational, and independent, then the mind of apostles, or, in other words, the mind of the Spirit is revealed, and there is no Divine warrant for anything else. If, in addition to this,—if, in contravention of this, we admit human warrant, we may admit any thing, and

had better cease to inquire after the mind of the Spirit altogether.

Congregational independency, however, as we have already observed, did not forbid *union* between the several churches of Christ, when that union was desirable, and disconnected from every thing involving authority. So far from forbidding union, it was instituted in order to it, that it might be genuine and safe, not fictitious and dangerous. Just as the laws of England, which defend the personal rights and property of every English subject, making every man's home his castle, into which even the king may not intrude against the owner's will, have laid the foundation for confiding intercourse and social union amongst all classes, on terms of mutual trust and good faith; so the laws of Christ, by making every church in every place independent of every other, with whose individual rights and liberties none may interfere, have laid the foundation for sympathy, fellowship, association, union, and mutual helpfulness between the several churches of Christ, on terms of perfect confidence. When men are huddled together in one house—as in a poorhouse, workhouse, or hospital—in wards which belong not to the occupiers, and into which officers, masters, governors may enter at any time, and all of which are under one general superintendance,—it is not denied that there may be no small degree of apparent union, or rather a coming together of the parties thus resident, which may at times be connected with the exhibition of good feeling and mutual sympathy; but it cannot be denied on the other hand, that in such a case the union is artificial rather than natural, arising from accident rather than choice, and more likely to engender collision, strife, ill will, and mutual hate, in consequence

of the compulsoriness of identical locality, rather than unity of friendship and love.

Similar to this is the condition of the churches of Christ, wherever they are united on a principle of compulsion under one general superintendency, instead of being independent, and thereby free to unite on a principle of choice. The larger the association in such a case, the more frequent the causes of collision, and the less intimate the union. Wherever the tree is to spread out its branches far and wide, all closely connected, and yet none interfering with or offering detriment to another, the growth must be natural, each branch occupying the precise place which nature, and nature alone, is sagacious enough to provide.

But if the union between the churches of the Apostolic era was preserved from becoming authoritative and centralizing by the independency of each local church, it was also preserved from being injured by, and from becoming dangerous to the civil interest, by being fenced round and cut off from all civil connexion and authority whatsoever, whether municipal, provincial or national. This is what we designate the third principle of independency, not as distinct from the former two, much less as opposed to them, but as a further development of them, in reference to the churches universally, considered in the aggregate * and in relation to the world and its rulers.

This principle may be stated in the following terms:—THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN THEIR AGGREGATE CHARACTER ARE INDEPENDENT OF ALL STATE

* I use the term *aggregate* in reference to the visible churches of Christ, and the term *catholic* in reference to the spiritual, and, therefore, invisible oneness of all Christ's people.

CONNEXION, SANCTION, INFLUENCE, AND SUBORDINATION WHATSOEVER, AS INDEPENDENT COMMUNITIES WHOSE CATHOLICITY OR ONENESS IS RELIGIOUS AND FOR RELIGIOUS ENDS ONLY.

The first thing provided for by Christ in reference to the adaptation of his holy religion to man was, that every individual Christian should be free to think, worship, and act in his religious capacity, as being subject to Christ and his Word alone. The second thing provided was, that each congregational church should be free to manage its own religious affairs in all matters pertaining to social worship and fellowship, at the same time without violation of the principles involved in the provisions of the first. The third thing was, that the churches of Christ in their aggregate or united character, should never present such an associate aspect *to* the civil power in any district, province, or nation, in any part of the world, as should undermine its rightful authority; never desire, seek, or derive such an influence *from* the civil power as should lead to an aggregate corporate authority of the Church over its component parts.

This is a point much to be insisted upon, and is therefore clearly, unequivocally developed in the New Testament, in statements expressly announcing it, in institutions observing it, and in practices proceeding upon it as an implied and essential truth.

What announcement can be more emphatic than that of Jesus Christ himself, when he witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate; when in the presence of the representative of civil power and authority, he said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now

is my kingdom not from hence." * The great Prophet and Head of the Church, the great Teacher of the world, the King of Zion, to whom every Christian in his individual capacity, and every church in its congregational capacity, and all the churches in their aggregate capacity, are subject, authoritatively announces the essential separateness of his kingdom from every thing worldly and temporal, from every thing partaking of secular influence, from every thing associated with physical and civil power! The base insinuation that Jesus thus spoke of the separateness of his kingdom from that of this world, because his subjects were then few and weak, but would not have us to interpret his words as reaching to those times when civil authority should come over to his side and espouse his cause, has been fully exposed and branded, and needs not to be seriously refuted again.†

* John xviii. 36.

† Whately's Kingdom of Christ, essay i.—" It is recorded of an ancient king of Egypt—one of the Ptolemies—that he employed a celebrated architect to build a magnificent lighthouse for the benefit of shipping, and ordered an inscription in honour of himself to be engraved on it. The architect, it is said, though inwardly coveting the honour of such a record for *himself*, was obliged to comply; but made the inscription on a plaster resembling stone, but of perishable substance. In the course of years this crumbled away; and the next generation saw *another* inscription, recording the name, not of the king, but of the architect, which had been secretly engraved on the durable stone below. Now, just such a device as this is attributed to our Lord and his apostles, by those who believe them to have designed that secular power should hereafter be called in to enforce the Christian faith, though all such designs were *apparently* disavowed, in order to serve a present purpose. According to such interpreters, " My kingdom is not of this world," was only an inscription on the perishable plaster; the design of " coercing and punishing," by secular power, all op-

The disclaimer which he puts upon all worldly connexion is as emphatic as words can make it. The language "else would my servants fight" shows that if it had not been his design to introduce a purely religious dispensation, which should extend its influence solely in the hearts of his subjects, and which in no case should come into union with, so as to be regulated or influenced by, secular and civil governments; then would he have acted, in all his career, on a different principle, and by wholly different agencies. Who cannot picture to himself how the Redeemer would have made his entrance into this world, and have exhibited the majesty of his power, if any such design as that which he disclaimed had been his! Would it not have been so arranged in the counsels of heaven, that the infant form which was cradled in a manger should be ushered into the world in circumstances suitable to the dignity of the Prince of all the kings of the earth, amidst the gaze of monarchs and the awe-struck homage of attendant rulers, every earthly throne the while paling its golden lustre, and the world's glory fading into insignificance before the

ponents of the true faith, was, it seems, the engraving on the stone beneath. "Render unto Cæsar the things that be Cæsar's," was but the outward part of the inscription; the addition was an inner hidden engraving, directing that Christians, when become strong enough, should compel both Cæsar and his subjects—all rulers and all citizens—either to acknowledge the true faith, or to forfeit their civil rights. It was the outside inscription only that ran thus:—"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man; . . . the powers that be are ordained of God." The secret characters on the *stone* said, "Take care, as soon as possible, to make every ordinance of man submit to *you*," and to provide that none but those of your own body shall *be* in authority; and that they shall use that authority in enforcing the profession of your religion."

splendor of the new-born Head of all principality and power! Would not that countenance, which was "more marred than the face of any man," have beamed with the conscious look of majesty, subduing the pride of every merely earth-born prince, and quelling every appearance of disloyalty by the lightning glances of his eye and the terrors of his clouded brow! Would not that voice, which uttered the accents of one "meek and lowly in heart," have been listened to when it issued from the lips of one enthroned, as the voice of God, every stern rebuke reverberating as thunder, and every word of approval breathing a pledge of bliss! Would not that hand, which was so often extended to bless the humble and the poor, have grasped and wielded, not in impotency of show, but amidst all the proofs of a more than human power, the sceptre of unlimited dominion! Would not that form, the image of which is in every mind as that of one who mysteriously suffered a voluntary humiliation, through which only occasionally the gleams of divinity were permitted to shine, have become associated by this time, in every mind, with the images of greatness alone, as a form which once rose aloft over all human forms — the very ideal of sculptured majesty—the model of the incarnation of a God!

But it was not so. Christ did not come to give any exaggerated views of physical strength, worldly power, or civil supremacy. The world had seen quite enough, before his coming, of the pomp and circumstance of earthly dominion, quite enough of the show and "observation" of artificial authority. He came to reveal a spiritual world in the soul of man, infinitely transcending everything visible in the outward world

of sense, the dominion of which was and ever is immeasurably beyond every appliance of secular influence, and whose subjugation is to be effected only by a sovereignty kindred to itself. Therefore it was that Christ came preaching the kingdom of heaven, and teaching the people, diffusing the truth, revealing the character and will of the Eternal, pouring the rays of light upon orbs benighted, and shedding beams of peace and joy into the distracted and bewildered spirit; by parable and promise and precept, by lessons simple and sublime, and, above all, by the one great illustrative act of his own vicarious death and sacrifice, demonstrating to the family of man that each member of it had a Father in heaven—a God of holiness and boundless mercy, who was willing to forgive all moral defect in his earth-born creatures, and to lead them back to the knowledge, love, and service of that Great Spirit from whom they had derived their own. In the accomplishment of this worthy end he rejected for himself, and disallowed for his followers and those whom he sent forth in his name, every secular influence. His truth was his kingdom, and its throne was to be set up in the human heart alone. "All power is mine in heaven and on earth" described the resources of his government; "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations—preach the gospel unto every creature," was the all-embracing and exclusive instrumentality by which the ends of that government were to be realized.

Nor were the apostles unfaithful to their trust. In all their ministry they were so guided by the spirit of their glorified Lord, that in no instance did they ally, or seek to ally, the world's influences with those which alone had been appointed by heaven. The

institutions and the teaching of the apostles corresponded with the dictum of their Great Master before Pontius Pilate. All was subservient to spiritual ends. While the world frowned around, their doctrines won their way to many hearts, and their institutions were a simple outward framework of social observance, suited to the spiritual ends they were intended to subserve. They spoke to the reason and conscience of man; and when men listened and believed, and were gathered together in communities, they vaunted not of new-grown power arising from numbers, but still preserved "the things of God" distinct from "the things of Cæsar." While the influence of Christianity, as inculcated by them, was to permeate the whole man, and the whole of society, and ultimately the whole world, it was to do this without any alliance of the gross and corrupting in human nature, without any adventitious aid from the authority of social aggregation, without any coercion derived from secular and civil institutions. The fairest flower that blooms has its localization in earthly soil, and is so far connected with the earth; but the secret processes by which it is elaborated are the result of vital impulses which an unseen power alone can afford, and the beauties and odours by which it regales the sense are never associated with the gross material from which it may have derived nutriment, and in the midst of which it springs up as the creation of a wonder-working hand. In like manner, Christianity is a development in the world, but is not of the world. Its growth and perfection are the result of fostering influences, which the Divine truth and Spirit alone can supply.

It is a great mistake to suppose that the apostles,

equally as Christ himself, might not have used worldly influence and have procured civil authority, had they desired it, or rather, had they been permitted to desire it. To doubt or deny this, is to deny that they had the power ascribed to them in the sacred record. Did not "God work with them"? Did they not effect miracles? Did they not both kill and save alive? And if so, was not the same amount of power, or a lesser, sufficient to have brought about a secular alliance between the governments of this world and the Christian associations which they formed? Is it harder to subdue the heart of a king—of an emperor—than the hearts of thousands of his subjects? Is it less difficult to raise the dead, than to bow the will of monarchs to the designs of heaven?

Unquestionably, if it had been the will of Christ, if it had not been in entire opposition to the genius of his gospel and the nature of his kingdom, he would have *established* his religion in the era of its first introduction and institution in the world. Had it been in accordance with the design of Him who had all power in heaven and on earth, he would, either personally or through his apostles, have supplanted at once all human dominion by his own, or have compelled the world's rulers to lend all the weight of their authority in the propagation of his truth. The fact that this was not done, but avoided and forbidden, is and ever will be the condemnation of those who, in the name of Christianity, court the arm of secular power, as well as of those who, whether moving in higher or lower grades, have either used or delegated their authority as civil rulers for the accomplishment of religious ends. The Word and practice both of Christ and his apostles are entirely opposed to every prin-

ciple of secular alliance in reference to the affairs of Christ's kingdom. Until the age of Constantine the churches of Christ knew nothing of such unhallowed confederacy, and since the age of Constantine to the present, no one thing has done so much to retard the spiritual progress of Christianity amongst men, and deceive the nations in respect to her real character, as this very thing. Even now truth lies bleeding, and charity is wounded, and Christians are divided, throughout the whole of nominal Christendom, in proportion as this Satanic device prevails. Neither will the churches of Christ, and the Christian men who compose them, become one, until a great reformation take place in this respect, and the kingdom of Christ be universally acknowledged as essentially and eternally distinct and separate from the kingdoms of this world.*

The point we have endeavoured to establish in these remarks, is one of vital importance; and therefore we have given it a separate consideration, although it is not essentially distinct from, but only a wider development of, the other principles of Independency. When mankind, under any form of organization, civil or ecclesiastical, are within reach of power and domination, they are apt to stretch forward to obtain it; and therefore it was of the last importance that the prospective spread of Christianity, and muliplication of Christian

* The kingdoms of this world will undoubtedly become "the kingdoms of God and his Christ;" but this will be either by their subordination to purely civil ends, through the agency of Christian men, or by their absorption into the kingdom of Christ, as being no longer needed. When all men are honest, and there is no fear of the violation of human liberty, what need of civil power, or the show of it? The magistrate is only "a terror to evil-doers;" but when there is no fear of evil-doing, what need of such a terror!

churches in the earth, should be connected with an announcement and institution of principles calculated to repress the spirit of human aggrandizement. Who knows not how it is possible for error and corruption to creep in at all doors? If the individual Christian be instructed to keep himself free from the influence of the world in all his religious performances; if the society of Christians meeting in one place be instructed to keep itself free from the same influence, and be so organized as to be perpetually taught the same lesson in its very separateness and self-government; it may nevertheless happen that a number of individuals and churches, when they become a majority in a nation, or otherwise possess a preponderating influence, may do those things, or connive at and secretly sanction those proceedings, in their aggregate capacity, which they would never dream of in their congregational and separate character; as in America, where men, boasting of their freedom, and even parading their liberty, become, in their corporate and aggregate character, the worst abettors and agents of slavery. It is not sufficient, therefore, that individual Independency, and communal or congregational Independency, be exhibited as the law of the New Testament institutions in reference to religion operating upon human society; aggregate Independency, or the essential separateness of the churches of Christ, in their aggregate aspect, from all worldly alliances whatsoever, must be held up to the distinct apprehension of Christian men, as equally a portion of the law of Christ.

Nor is this matter without interest to statesmen and civil rulers. When they have been taught to confide in the churches of Christ, as a number of congre-

gations existing for religious and moral ends alone; when they cease to fear the ambition of the church and its officers; when they have learned that no aggression ever can or will be made upon their lawful authority as civil rulers; they will not seek to ally themselves to that to which they can ally themselves only nominally, nor to subvert that which does not interfere with their purely secular dominion. The reason why statesmen and civil rulers have sought to connect themselves with the church, under one form or another, has ever been either the fear of the church's obtaining an ascendancy over them, or a desire to make the church's well organized instrumentality a tool for the more effectual accomplishment of their secular aims. When civil rulers have confidence that the existence and operations of the churches of Christ are for religious ends only, and are expressly cut off by Divine institution from all civil connexion whatever, they will look on without jealousy and without any desire for the amalgamation of interests. When they are able to see that the churches are moving heavenward, according to the design of their Great and Sovereign Head, whilst *their* civil rule moves earthward and for purely temporal ends, they will no more seek to bring the two kinds of movement under one superintendance, than to make the moon's orbit concentric with that of the earth, or God's angels wear the livery of this lower world.

In the present age of evangelizing effort, it is more important than ever that this third principle of Independency should be known, explained, and boldly espoused. If the Christian religion is to be diffused, as most Christian men believe it ultimately will be, amongst all nations, it must sooner or later be ascer-

tained in what way, when all men and nations are Christian, the church shall exist as distinct from the world. When there are no worldly men or women—when all are the subjects of that kingdom which is not of this world—how shall the church be known in its church capacity? According to the law of institution laid down in the New Testament, all will be easily settled. Each locality will have its own local church still; union between the churches, in so far as practicable or necessary, will still exist; but there will be no aggregate incorporation of churches in district, province, or nation. Civil affairs will be conducted by civil officers, in so far as their functions may be needed, all citizens and subjects rendering a ready obedience; while the conduct of religious affairs will be superintended by the churches' officers, in their religious capacity only. The religious interests of a nation will be promoted by religious institutions alone, although those who are associated in their promotion may have other office than that which is religious; and the civil interests of a nation will be promoted by civil institutions alone, although those who promote them, and preside over their management, may have other office than civil, elsewhere than in their civil capacity. The two ends being distinct; the means of accomplishing them will be distinct also. The one wheel of a nation's government will move on smoothly, being moved by religious men, but not in their religious capacity; and the many wheels of the churches' government will move on smoothly, being moved by religious men in their religious capacity only. As the soul's functions are separate from, though resident in those of the body, and the body's functions separate from, though in close neighbour-

nood with those of the soul; so will the operations of the churches be distinct and separate from those of the civil government; while the operations of the civil government will be distinct and separate from those of the churches. There will be near neighbourhood and co-ordination, yet with perfect separation of movements. Heaven and earth will meet together, and yet not become identical; the kingdom which is not of this world will, in all its local operations, be connected with, and yet maintain its absolute separateness from, the kingdoms that are of this world; until earth be lifted up and absorbed in the perfectly safe rule of the God of Heaven, and a pure, perfect theocracy become again the embracing circle of all things.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCY CLEARED FROM MISCONCEPTION.

The principles developed in the preceding chapters, are now to be regarded as the indication of the Divine will, in respect to the organization and constitution of the Christian church. There is nothing beyond them, or in contravention of them, in the writings of the New Testament. If, therefore, we use the New Testament as the sole authority and standard in our ecclesiastical practice, we shall be scrupulously careful to follow this rule, and this alone.

It seems needful, however, to prevent misconception, in reference to the relation which these principles hold to other essentials of Christianity, and the manner in which they are affected by the practices of professing Christians, whether adherents of a scriptural system of church organization and government or not.

Let it be understood, then, that these principles form only a portion of Christianity, as revealed from heaven,—that portion which is intended to subserve the spiritual and practical uses of the remainder. They constitute a shield for the defence of the liberties of Christian men, and, at the same time, a vehicle for

the diffusion of Christian doctrine. In themselves, and by themselves, apart from other principles, they are of little or no consideration. When there is no vital piety in an individual, the principle of personal Independency has nothing to defend worthy of the name. When the spirit of vital godliness does not animate a professedly Christian congregation, the principle of congregational Independency will not become a substitute for it, will not tend to edification, will not evangelize, will not effect any manner of work. When the churches or congregations are not those of "the faithful," the principle of aggregate Independency will not by itself supply the defect, or conduce to union, sympathy, and co-operation. These principles are revealed as those by which *Christian* men are to be shielded and benefited in all the operations of genuine piety. It is taken for granted that other principles also are in operation, which these are intended only to subserve.

A parallel may be justly drawn between the operation of these principles and those by which the personal, domestic, and national liberties of a people are secured in a free country. The personal liberty which a citizen enjoys is an undeniable blessing. In itself, however, and apart from other things, it is of little utility. Where a man has no intelligence, character, possessions, resources, by and through which to act the part of a free man, his personal liberty becomes a mere negation. The domestic liberty which a family may possess, is undoubtedly a great advantage. But, in itself, and apart from the operation of those kindly, wise, and benevolent feelings and affections, which ought to kindle around every hearth, it is an advantage purely nominal. The

general liberty which a nation may acquire is an invaluable inheritance; but, unless the nation inherit or secure something more,—knowledge, virtue, industry, commerce, religion,—even this privilege, after which so many nations are sighing, is in effect an unappreciated and worthless thing. In all these particular exemplifications of liberty, it is manifest that something in addition to liberty is needful in order to the exhibition of its true worth. Whilst it is everything in order to the security and perfection of good, whether personal, domestic, or national, there must be the existence or prospect of that good before its value can be either seen or felt. So is it in reference to the principles of Independency. All the noble impulses and exercises of Christian godliness must be promoted if Christian Independency is to be any thing more than a mere name. The casket is of importance only when it enshrines and preserves within it the jewel of great price.

Such considerations as these will enable us to decide upon the merit of all objections founded upon the alleged inefficiency of Independency to accomplish the ends for which the churches of Christ exist. In some given instances, it may be observed, or it has been observed, that men professing to be Independents, have lamentably failed in their duty; and the conclusion drawn from such facts has been that the principles of Independency, by which these professedly Christian men have been distinguished, are in fault. Of course, it might be replied, that if there were examples of defect in one locality, there are the opposite examples of Christian zeal and abundant success in other localities and in other periods, which show that not the principles of Inde-

pendency are in fault, but something else. From the period in which the apostolic churches (or some of them) set the example, down to the present time, there have been noble instances of voluntary effort and self-denying exertion on the part of the Independent churches of Christ in maintaining the institutions and diffusing the doctrines of the gospel amongst mankind.

But, amply sufficient as these counter-facts are to meet the objection on a general or average view of the question, they do not practically meet it in any single instance, in any given locality, and are not likely to do so, because the real merits of the objection are not touched. Every system may present its varied record of successes and reverses; every form of church organization adopted by men, whether free or formal, whether scriptural or unscriptural, has been exhibited in connection with some amount both of good and evil. Even Popery, the most unscriptural of all forms of organization, has not been without some instances of real success in evangelizing the world; and even Independency, the only scriptural form (according to our view) of church organization, has not been without instances of inefficiency and failure. It is evident, therefore, that the true method of meeting the objection we have noticed is not the one too often adopted; but an enunciation of the broad distinction between piety and polity. Let it be seen, that while the principles of Independency are clearly revealed in Scripture, they are revealed only as a portion of a great whole; let it be seen, that they are revealed only as an outward framework of liberty for the preservation of something more important, and without which their value would be to a great extent inappreciable; let it be seen, that whilst they indicate

the methods by which genuine piety must operate when exhibited under a social organization, they can have little or nothing to indicate where such piety does not exist; let it be seen that, as the flaming swords of cherubim guarded the gates of Paradise for the sake of the tree of life within the sacred enclosure, so these Divine principles guard all the entrances to the church of Christ, for the sake of the genuine manifestations of the spirit of life which are supposed to exist there; and then no objection will ever be made to the principles themselves, on such grounds as those which we have been considering. It will at once be understood that the Word and Spirit of God are the appropriate sources of those influences which are to lead to piety, holiness, usefulness; whilst the principles of Independency are only an outward framework of social organization, by which the operation of such piety, holiness, and usefulness, is to be regulated and preserved from injury.

If, for example, any men, or number of men or churches, professing to be Independent, fail in the exhibition of a loving or liberal spirit; if they are supine, worldly, unaccustomed to the zealous support of their own religious institutions, niggardly in their contributions to the cause ofChrist, divided among themselves and given to schism;—if such a description is ever realized amongst professedly Christian men and churches, in connection with the maintenance of the principles of Independency; those principles are no more in fault—are no more to be charged with the evils thus exhibited, than the gospel is to be charged with the unbelief, impenitency, impurity, which may be exhibited amongst those who hear it, or profess to receive it as a revela-

tion from heaven. The end of the gospel is to save; but in order to this there must be faith, penitence, and holiness of life. In like manner, the end of the principles of Independency is not only liberty of conscience, but the edification of the body of Christ and the conversion of the world; but in order to these there must be the diffusion of scriptural knowledge, faith, love, zeal, amongst those who profess to hold them. What the apostle has said respecting faith, when alone, may also be said of these principles: "As the body without the spirit is dead," so Independency without piety is dead also.

The only fair way of testing these principles, on utilitarian grounds, is to suppose their practical exhibition amongst a body of people wholly possessed of the right spirit. How will they work amongst such? Will they not completely suit that condition of the church in which there is most of enlightened scriptural knowledge, vigorous faith, warm love, ardent zeal, and liberality? Is it not a characteristic of genuine, and especially of great piety, that it is voluntary, springing from the individual conscience and heart, having its origin in self, and brooking no control from any quarter but that which is or is thought to be divine? While a feigned and gregarious piety is made up of mere imitations, and is compatible with almost any assignable amount of compulsion, in the shape either of dogmatism, authority, or official superintendance; genuine, real, vital religion, that kind of religion which will lead the possessor of it to suffer rather than to deny, and to die rather than to betray, admits no influence, authority, interference, but such as is congenial with itself. The principle of personal independency is exactly suited, then, to foster as well as to develop genuine piety in the individual.

Again, the characteristic of a healthy state of religion in a congregation or church is, that it is voluntary on the part of all the members composing the congregation, a simultaneous movement of all hearts in consequence of a number of individual convictions and impulses; not, as in a complicated piece of machinery, where all the separate parts are moved by one source of power acting mechanically upon them, but as in a rich meadow, where every individual root develops its own vital forces, and yet all send up the outgrowth of their individual life together. The second principle of Independency, which gives the power of self-government to every Christian congregation, suits itself to this characteristic. It forbids all compulsion; that is, it forbids everything approaching to a merely mechanical religion.

Yet once more the same characteristic belongs to a healthy state of religion when diffused over the widest possible surface, or, in other words, amongst the churches of Christ universally. That is not a happy state of things in which one may behold a vast aggregate of churches and congregations swayed this way or that, in one direction or another, as some one human authority may dictate; like so many puppets moved by wires from a common centre, or, like so many regiments of soldiers, marching with even step and in most orderly array, under the direction of a commander-in-chief. That is the most pleasing picture in which you may behold all the churches of Christ acting independently of one another, in so far as human authority is concerned, and yet in concert, because of identity of faith in the same essential truths, and identity of aims in respect to the great ends for which they individually exist; like flowers

which spring up simultaneously, and yet independently of one another, all over the earth in spring-time,—or the corn fields, which everywhere produce the same golden crop, in the time of autumn. The third principle of Independency is suited to this characteristic of an universally diffused and scriptural piety amongst the churches of Christ. All worldly influence, interference, and authority are forbidden, that the churches universally may grow up naturally and spontaneously, as the result of influences derived from the truth alone, and under the fostering care of that great invisible Head who has promised to be with His people, even unto the end of the world.

If, in reply to all that has been advanced, it be said that other modes and plans of Church polity are better than the one we have been illustrating, we can only repeat what we have stated in respect to the paramount authority of that which is divinely revealed. It would not be difficult, although it would occupy much space, to show, that in proportion as the apostolic pattern has been departed from, the church has lost somewhat more or less of its purity or liberty. Even those who seem to have discovered justifying causes for deviating from the primitive model in various periods of the history of the Christian church, have acknowledged as much.* Neither can it be questioned, that in modern times the various sections of the universal church are prosperous in proportion as the congregational and voluntary element is restored to its primitive place and power. But we are

* Neander, for example, in his History of the Three First Centuries, vol. i. pp. 208—213. Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, cent. 2, part ii. sec. 3, &c.

not prepared to put the system we espouse to the test on any such principle as this. The apparent success of a system is not a fair criterion in all cases. Human sagacity is not competent to the task of applying it. Proselytism may be mistaken for conversion—uniformity for unity—formality and torpor for harmony — worldly zeal and ambitious enterprise for Christian activity—ostentatious pietism for spiritual life—riches and emoluments for graces—and accession of numbers for divine success. "Judge not that ye be not judged," is a caution as well as a maxim. And if it be so difficult to determine the real character of an individual, how impossible to carry on to a safe conclusion any such investigation as that which the test we are now considering would demand. Devoutly thankful are we that we are not shut up to any such hopeless method of determining the principles of Christian organization. The pattern, the model, the original and divinely instituted platform of church polity is before us in the Divine Word; it is our privilege and our duty to follow that. We cannot be far wrong when we tread in the steps of inspired apostles, and hold fast by the principles which they have sanctioned.

There yet remains another point, respecting which misconception may exist—namely, the extent to which the principles of Independency are obligatory, in connexion with the practical duties of Christian fellowship.

Let it be observed, then, that whatever addition may be made to these principles, nothing must be allowed to subvert them. There is no warrant for any addition which shall affect them as principles. While, in matters of mere detail, each church is at

liberty to follow its own judgment, no invasion must, at any time, or under any circumstances, be made upon individual, congregational, and aggregate liberty. When details swell out into a change of principle, they are as unscriptural as if the principle were directly supplanted or subverted; but when they affect mere convenience, and are adopted without difference of opinion, amongst those who may be supposed to regulate their conduct by them, liberty and independence are still enjoyed.

It may be of advantage, perhaps, to illustrate this point more fully.

Let it be remembered, then, that there is an essential distinction between a principle and the mere details associated with its practical observance. While the former, like a stream, flows in a definite direction, and in a clearly ascertained channel, the latter, like the eddies and bubbles which move along with it and upon its surface, are susceptible of an endless variation. The laws of development in vegetable and animal structures, for example, are principles both definite and fixed; but, whilst the laws are unalterable, there is ever combined with their operation an infinite variety in the vegetable and animal forms themselves—so much so, that no two were ever exactly alike. Every plant has its own shape and hue; every animal has its own distinctive and peculiar configuration. If all the roses that ever bloomed were spread together on the lap of mother earth, no two could be found that were in every respect alike; if all the men that ever lived were collected on the plains of some vast world, no two countenances could be discovered in which some difference might not be detected. And yet, amidst all this variety of detail,

every rose might be known to be a rose, and every countenance to be human. The same distinction is observable between the principles and details of moral conduct. Although God exacts a just homage and obedience from all his intelligent creatures, it is probable that no two of all his angels render him exactly the same service, or comply with his requirements in an identical course of behaviour. Variety in detail, unity in principle, seems to be the established order of the universe.

Let these illustrations be applied to the three principles of Independency, that their true character may be appreciated.

While nothing may be done which shall prove subversive of the *individual* Independency of Christian men, that individual independency is compatible with the appliance of innumerable influences adapted to benefit those who are shielded by it from unlawful aggression. While no form of church government or procedure may be instituted which shall violate *congregational* Independency, the Christian community is at liberty to adopt an endless variety of expedients, (always supposing that they are not inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity and the revealed rules of Christian duty,) in order to accomplish the diversified ends for which it exists. While no connexion may be formed between the churches of Christ and the rulers of this world, by virtue of which the principle of *aggregate* Independency may be subverted, there are legitimate methods by which the churches of Christ may exert a benign influence upon the world, and, on the other hand, there are methods by which the world may create facilities for the expanding operations of the churches; even as

earth and ocean, while mutually observant of the distinctive laws of their existence, operate beneficially upon one another in giving and receiving, each in its turn, those exhaled influences which tend to the invigoration and lasting freshness of both. Once for all, let it be understood that Independency, in all its developments, is only a protective principle; a cover under whose grateful shade every goodly plant may grow; a fence thrown around the spiritual existence embodied in the individual, the community, and the church at large, for its preservation, that it may thereby be free to respond to every heavenly impulse. But, in order to the accomplishment of all the ends for which Independency has been instituted, there must be spiritual life and growth. The word must have free course and be glorified. The Divine blessing must descend. In vain the Divine provision which secures spiritual liberty, if that liberty be not exercised in the cultivation of all those habitudes, and the performance of all those offices, which are the characteristics of Christ's freemen!

In the above remarks, we have drawn the circle in which, and in which alone, expediency may operate. In matters of mere detail, expediency will find ample scope. The time, and place, and mode of worship—the season and order of Christian fellowship—the arrangements which tend to the comforts and success of the social community—the methods by which the resources of the churches may be applied to the ever-shifting exigencies of the world;—all these are matters which a wise expediency is at liberty to determine. But beyond this expediency may not go. When it usurps the place of principle, liberty is violated, Christ's law invaded, and his institutions undermined.

To suppose, as some have done, that expediency is the sole guide of Christ's people in matters pertaining to church organization and discipline, is to reflect upon the wisdom of the Great Head of the church; for, what head of a worldly community even, would leave that community without laws for its government? Either Christ has enacted laws and appointed institutions for the observance of His people, or there is no warrant for church organization at all. If the latter hypothesis be true, what enormities have been practised upon Christian men in every age of the church's history! What frauds! what oppression! what a shameful soliciting of men, to place themselves under this and that form of church polity! If the former be true, who dare set at naught the appointments of Christ? Who will have the effrontery to put forth any scheme in opposition to that which Infinite Wisdom has revealed?

It will now be apparent in what light the principles of Independency are to be regarded, and for what purposes they have been instituted. The end—the great end for which the frame-work of the church's constitution has been Divinely established is, that the genius of Christianity may be preserved unimpaired amidst the social developments in which it is intended to be manifested. The perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, is the Saviour's design in all the agencies and ministrations of His appointment. The lively stones of the spiritual temple are, as separate stones, to be built upon the one and only foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; and yet, after such a sort as that the whole building

is to be fitly framed together—a vast and united aggregate for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The practical problem which the providence and grace of God are represented in Scripture as solving, out of the materials which humanity afford, by means of Divine truth and Divine institutions, is, to unite in one holy brotherhood *all* the called, and chosen, and faithful, and yet to present *every* man perfect before God. Hence the prayer of the Saviour—all comprehending in respect to the destiny of the church, and reaching forward in its anticipations to the most distant ages—"That they ALL may be perfect in ONE." Hence also, the announcement of the same Divine design by the apostle of the Gentiles—that "all may come unto the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus." To subserve that great end the independency of individual Christians and churches has been guaranteed by the laws of Christ's kingdom, as the only principle by which it can be realized.

We now take leave of this portion of our subject, in order to review the history of the church of Christ in ages succeeding the apostolic. In so doing, a solemn feeling pervades our spirit. We seem to be passing from holy to common ground. Our guide is no longer a Divine book, but a number of uninspired witnesses. Henceforth, our position is completely changed. The personal ministry of the Great Head of the church has ceased. Apostles no longer watch over the disciples. Every living inspired voice is silent. The footsteps of infallible men no longer awaken the echoes in the peaceful vale, where the sheep are gathered. The age of miracles is past. Nature resumes her ordinary circle of operations. Pro-

phetic warnings sound in our ears respecting grievous wolves that shall devour the flock, and false teachers that shall lead astray; but no infallible living guide remains to set things in order, to rebuke, or even to reprove. All ages are now on a level — the first century no nearer to the source of inspired truth than the last. We seem to leave the bright circle in which heavenly voices, actually blending with the human, syllable forth the indications of the Divine will, directing, instructing, warning, reproving; and we descend to the common earthly ground, where human voices alone are heard—a mingled and confused sound —and only replete with truth and harmony in so far as they echo the sentiments of the WRITTEN WORD.

Let us descend, then, and "try the spirits, whether they be of God!"

BOOK II.

THE GRADUAL DEPARTURE OF THE CHURCH INTO ANTI-CHRISTIAN ERROR, UNTIL THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE STARTING POINT OF POST-APOSTOLIC HISTORY.

The apostles having fulfilled their commission as the inspired teachers and rulers of the churches formed under their superintendence, and having departed this life to be once more united to their Lord, the entire body of the faithful scattered throughout the various regions of the world were thenceforth left to the instructions they had given, and the institutions they had established, as their sole guide in all future time. Their living voices are no longer to be heard; their personal presence is no longer to be approached. It seemed fit to the wisdom of God to remove his ambassadors from that revolted portion of his dominions to which he had sent them with his messages of mercy, after they had fully disclosed his will. He might have retained their services, or the services of men similarly qualified, by whom the churches might have been ordered and superintended from age to age, even to the end of time, had it comported with his designs. But he did not. Having authoritatively communicated his will in the first age of the church's history, by the living voice and personal ministrations of the apostles, in the first instance, and afterwards by inspired writings which were to hand down to distant periods the sub-

stance of all that had been Divinely taught, whether by way of doctrine or institutions, it seemed good to Him who is Head over all things to his church to withdraw this extraordinary agency, and to conduct the affairs of his kingdom henceforth by ordinary human agency alone. The word of Christ and the spirit of Christ remained, as the only infallible guide to mankind in all matters pertaining to their religious interests.

Henceforth it became the duty of Christian men to "seek out the word of the Lord," and to follow its instructions. The foundation on which Christians and Christian churches were exclusively to build, was that which had been so clearly defined: "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Now that inspired authority in the persons of living men had left the church, no human authority was to occupy its place. The written word was to be the sole substitute for a personal apostolic authority, while the Holy Spirit was promised to accompany that word when diffused amongst men by teaching, and preaching, and other kindred means.

Before the last of the apostles had entered into rest, the word of the gospel had sounded forth into all the principal regions of the earth. East and west, north and south, churches, consisting of greater or smaller numbers, had been planted. Arabia, India, Africa, Europe, had been summoned to yield their spiritual converts to the King of Zion,* and many had gladly obeyed. The stars which had been kindled in the firmament, though not thickly clustering, were suffi-

* Milman's Hist. of Christianity, book ii. chap. iii.; Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c.; Rose, vol. i. pp. 73—78; Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xv.

cient to have irradiated the world. If true to their character and design, to the resources with which they were entrusted, and to the spirit of life whose agency and co-operation had been made the subject of promise, they might have chased away the clouds of ancient darkness, and suffused the earth with the radiance of heaven.

In order that the great ends of their existence might be accomplished, unimpeded by worldly contaminations, all the churches were established, according to what we have advanced in a former portion of our work, on a basis of Independency suited to the genius of the new era. Every church, whether large or small, whether in city, town, or village, was a complete organization in itself. The members composing the churches were Christians, and Christians only; avowed and recognized disciples of Christ. All were on a common footing of independent faith and practice. No man was called "Lord;" one was their Master, even Christ, and all were satisfied with occupying the place of "brethren." The officers of the churches were their servants, chosen by each several church, as their service might be needed. Humility, experience, purity of life, spiritual gifts, were the only qualifications for office, which was at the same time more onerous than remunerating, more responsible than profitable. The spiritual oversight and rule was committed to one class of men, called elders or bishops; * and the secular management of

* "It is therefore certain that every church was governed by a union of elders or overseers (*i.e.* presbyters or bishops) chosen from among themselves, . . . in the age immediately succeeding the apostolic, of which we have unfortunately so few authentic memorials." Neander's Hist. of the First Planting, &c., vol. i. p. 169.

the church's affairs was entrusted, for executive purposes, to another class of men called deacons. At the same time, the members of the church collectively had the supreme power, and each member was at liberty to use his gifts for the edification of the rest. In the midst of Jewish and heathen darkness, these primitive churches shone, scattered here and there, like the peaceful lights which cheer the eye of a traveller as he approaches a populous region by night!

Nothing had transpired as yet in the history of any church to subvert the primitive organization. The apostolic ministry has only just ceased. The apostles themselves are held in full remembrance. Their spirit yet walks abroad. The sound of their voices still floats in every wind, "So we ordain in all the churches." While in respect to doctrine, where of necessity there is much wider room for latitude of opinion, there may be many heresies, as was the case during a great portion of the apostolic age; in respect to the more practical matter of organization, there is no deviation from the original model. Here and there individuals, departing from the spirit of the gospel, may strive insinuatingly for the pre-eminence, or churches may yield too much to individual or party influence. But there is no radical change at present. Liberty and right cannot be undermined in a day. All parties are too much interested in their own spiritual immunities, to submit to their invasion suddenly, and all at once. Persecution keeps the churches in a healthy state. Dead branches are broken off by such winds, while those which are full of sap become more healthy and sturdy, refusing to yield, and growing apace.

Hierarchical pretensions have not yet budded. The servant has not had leisure to mount the ladder

of a worldly ambition. Facilities have not yet been afforded for the encroachments of pre-eminence. The two orders have not yet become multiplied. All is simplicity; and office is not yet aspired to for the sake of worldly influence or secular ends.

Synods and councils are, as yet, unheard of things; and generations must pass away before any dreams respecting them can be realized. While there is much of intercourse between Christians, as they pass from town to town for purposes of merchandise or in order to avoid persecution; and between churches also in seasons of oppression or famine; there are no symptoms of visible church union, much less of amalgamation. Catholicity does not extend beyond the sphere of the spiritual and invisible. The Christian communities in the cities or towns are independent of those in the country; while those in the country are independent of such as exist in the towns. All is simplicity. It is not yet imagined that majorities can determine what is truth; that numbers can supersede the use of arguments. Divisions and heresies arise, as they have arisen from the beginning; but each church manages such things as come within its own province. The apostles have left no precept, instituted no precedent, for settling such matters by any other means than those which already exist. Each church is agreed respecting its own faith and practice, and is based on the understanding of such agreement. If novelties, whether of doctrine or discipline, are introduced, the natural reply on the part of the individual church is, "We have no such custom, neither have the churches of Christ." Thus latitudinarianism is excluded, and, at the same time, liberty enjoyed. No need is felt for councils when

each church manages its own affairs. Extra-congregational presbyteries, and diocesan domination are no where dreamed of, no where required. It takes time—and many successive changes—and the intervention of many questionable influences—before such things can be brought about!

Such was the ecclesiastical condition of the churches of Christ at the close of the apostolic era. Their political relations were equally remote from every thing involving a violation of Independency. To patronize Christianity had not yet entered into the mind of the world's rulers; to exterminate it—if that could be accomplished—was their only aim. While here and there, on occasions, and at wide intervals, influential men, and even subordinate magistrates, favour the new religion, they have scarcely courage enough to do so openly and before the world. Like Nicodemus they are afraid to come to Jesus, except by night. It is a proscribed religion—an illicit thing *—an atheistic system †—a branded fellowship.‡ Such is the prevalent idea of the world and its rulers respecting Christianity at this early period. The Roman emperors, however much they may differ from one another in other respects, are agreed in this; and the religion of the cross is alternately condemned and feared.§ All other religions are tolerated; even patronized and

* *Religio illicita.*

† *ἄθεοι, ασεβεῖς*

‡ *Sodalitia illicita—Collegia illicita.*

§ Both Neander and Gieseler discredit the testimony of Tertullian who affirms that Tiberius proposed a bill to the Senate "that Christ should be received amongst the Roman gods." Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. Rose, vol i. p. 88, 89. Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 81.

established. Not satisfied with her own myriad deities, all the varieties of pagan superstition receive the formal homage of Rome. The followers of Jesus alone are a persecuted and oppressed race, and their faith alone is a most pernicious and detestable superstition.* While in fact no detriment could ever happen to the empire in consequence of its diffusion, because it was cut off from all political relations and secular alliances, the moral influence of its disciples was such as to inspire the rulers with an instinctive dread. A virtue seemed to emanate from it, even under circumstances of oppression, like that which proceeded from Christ in the garden of Gethsemane, when those who sought to apprehend him went backward, and fell to the ground. Not coming from man, it could not amalgamate with human religions, and was feared all the more on that account. It was regarded, therefore, as the most odious and ineradicable of heresies; hateful to rulers because of its invisible potency, which not all the usual appliances of law could suppress;† hateful to the multitude, because of the purity, simplicity, austerity, with which it was ever combined. Again and yet again attempts are made to crush it, but in vain. Cruelty applies her tortures, the wild beasts are gorged with their prey, blood flows in torrents, the martyr flames ascend to heaven but the gospel triumphs! The more the heavenly plant is trodden under foot, the more rapidly it grows, and the

* Pliny (lib. x. ep. 96) speaks of it as a *Superstitio prava et immodica* . . . . a perverse and extravagant superstition.

† Pliny (lib. x. ep. 96) speaks of the Christians as the subjects of a pertinacious and inflexible obstinacy—*pertinaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem*, &c. This is the famous letter to the Emperor Trajan.

more fresh the verdure of its leaf. Floods of persecution cannot quench the fire which has descended from heaven; on the contrary, like that which blazed on the altar of Elijah, the greater the obstruction the more fiercely it burns!

Such was the condition of Christianity and of the church when the voice of inspiration ceased to be a living voice, and became enshrined henceforth in the Written Word. It is now our business to trace the history of those changes which transpired in succeeding ages. But our readers must understand precisely what it is that we have to do, and how we propose to accomplish it.

To enumerate all the influences which have contended against the primitive faith and institutions of the Christian church—to note their character and origin—to review all the changes in doctrine and practice which have resulted from them—is the work of the ecclesiastical historian. Such a work, embracing many ages, involves an almost incalculable amount of research. But for our purpose, so much as this is not needed. A more simple view of the matter will suffice. In tracing the course of a stream, pure at its source and fed by the dews of heaven, through a country inhabited by men, it is not needful to do more than indicate the fact that corruption has tainted it and changed its primitive character. To analyze all the ingredients that have entered into its composition as it has passed onwards, may be necessary, if the exact nature of the component parts is required; but it is scarcely needful, if the object be merely to ascertain the fact that a change has taken place. So in reference to our subject. If our object were to give an exact account of the ever-changing doctrines which have

been held under the name of Christianity, or of the constantly varied aspects which the nominal church of Christ has assumed in different ages since the apostolic, our task would be endless, and, in consequence of the contradictory testimonies which have been handed down to us, very imperfect. But such exactness of detail is not requisite. With the history of doctrines we have scarcely anything at all to do; and in reference to the constitution and organization of the Christian church, we shall be satisfied if, by appealing to indubitable testimony, we can show that great changes have from time to time taken place, which have resulted in a complete departure from the primitive pattern instituted in the age of Christ and his apostles. Our aim will be accomplished if, by applying the three principles of Independency—illustrated in the preceding portion of the present volume—as tests, we are thereby able to show that there was a period in the post-apostolic history of the church when all was primitive and simple, and that as time rolled on corruption made successive inroads upon the original constitution of things, in reference to the affairs of Christ's kingdom. We may not have the leisure or ability to analyze all the ingredients which at different periods have coalesced with or changed the character of the once pure and limpid stream; but it is not beyond the compass of ordinary industry to detect the fact that a gradual transformation has been effected.

Such, then, is the definite object we have before us. According to the views we have propounded, the farthest extreme to which a professed church, or number of professed churches, may go in departing from Christ's institutions in respect to church organization, is when all the three principles of Independency are wanting.

The nearest approximation to the apostolic pattern is when all the three principles of Independency are observed. Between these two extremes all gradations of comparative perfection or imperfection may exist. Here, then, are our tests! We shall examine the records of post-apostolic history, not for the purpose of ascertaining what the church was intended to be by its great Head, but for the purpose of learning how far professing Christians have adhered to or departed from the primitive model. We shall not enter upon our task prepossessed, as some have been, by the false notion that it is needful to watch all the chamelion changes of the church in order to know what Christ would have his church to be and do; but whilst making all allowances for human infirmity, as betrayed in the successive corruptions of Christianity, we shall set out with the conviction that all doctrine and all duty is revealed in the New Testament, and that ecclesiastical history can only indicate how far that doctrine and that duty have been appreciated by the professed disciples of Christ.

There is one point, however, in respect to which the lessons of post-apostolic history may teach us much; and to this we are anxious to draw attention, as a matter of some importance.

There is a law of physical science, called the law of *momentum*, according to which, a body, when set in motion, will continue to move after a given rapidity, and in a given direction, until the motion is impeded or turned aside, by counteracting or deflecting influences. A similar law is observable in the sphere of morals, and in reference to human institutions; and we shall apply it in the elucidation of our subject. If the apostles followed an uniform plan in the or-

ganization of Christian churches, during the entire period of their ministry; and if that plan was universally adopted during the apostolic age, it is reasonable to expect that, by virtue of a principle of *moral momentum*, such a plan of organization would be continued after that age for some time—at least until transforming influences were able to effect a change. The very early records of post-apostolic history, therefore, become of great importance as means of determining the correctness or incorrectness of any hypothesis which may be formed respecting what the apostolic plan and pattern really was. While later records are of little or no service in reference to such a point, the early records are invaluable, and the most early the most invaluable. It would be most illogical, for example, to test any hypothesis in respect to the apostolic pattern by what is recorded concerning the constitution of the Christian church in the fourth century; and yet more so to test it by the constitution of the church in the ninth; unless it could be shown that no deviation had taken place, during the interval between those periods and the apostolic. But if there be records of the first and second century, respecting the constitution of the Christian church as it then existed, it is most logical to examine those records for the purpose of ascertaining how far they corroborate or disprove any hypothesis which may be formed from the inspired records of the New Testament. Indeed, it is just here that the main use of post-apostolic testimony is discoverable. To take the guage of error, and measure the growth of impiety in successive periods of the church's history—to watch the workings of worldly ambition under the monk's cowl and the pope's tiara—to trace the effects of hierarchical aggrandize-

ment on the doctrines of the cross and the manners of the people—may not be without their uses; but to read the human record for the purpose of testing one's interpretation of the Divine, is a labor more worthy, and likely to yield a more abundant recompense.

This, then, is the course we propose to follow. Starting from the apostolic era, with the hypothesis that the three principles of Independency were then fully developed, we shall enter upon an examination of the records of post-apostolic history, in order to see how that hypothesis is substantiated. Instead of passing rapidly over the early testimonies, as some have done, we shall lay them under contribution as being by far the most important in connection with our object. And if it shall appear, as we are convinced it will, that the nearer we ascend to the time of the apostles the more abundantly our hypothesis is confirmed, then we shall deem it no assumption to affirm that the principles of Independency are not only developed in the writings of the New Testament, but corroborated by the history of the church.

At the same time we propose to go a step further than this. We shall endeavour to trace the more important processes by which the simple institutions of primitive times became changed in successive ages, until every vestige of the Divine original was lost. This will bring us down to those periods in which the darkness of the night compelled men to sigh for the dawn, and thus in effect to anticipate the advent, of the Great Reformation.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF INDEPENDENCY.

[A.D. 80—167.]

THE title of the present chapter indicates the conviction at which we have arrived respecting the complexion of the church's constitution and organization in the earliest period of ecclesiastical history. It was but natural, on the principle of a moral momentum referred to a little way back, that the churches of Christ should remain for some time as the apostles had left them. In doctrine there might be change and difference of opinion, since this had happened and had become observable in the apostolic age; but it was hardly possible for principles involving rights and liberties to be soon parted with. There were only two ways, in fact, by which, on the supposition that the principles of Independency were instituted at first, any great deviation from them could be effected—namely, by a sudden convulsion in the religious world, or by a gradual transition to other principles as the result of a series of innovations. That the latter was the mode in which apostolic institutions were ultimately subverted, we hope to show as we advance.

It has been observed somewhere by a modern writer,* that the attempt to separate fact from fable, in respect to the early history of nations, is like entering a stalactite cavern for the purpose of ascertaining where the parent rock terminates, and where the accretion begins. So great has the difficulty been felt to be, that for a long time our historians were accustomed to commence their works with what they designated the *fabulous* age. Modern research and sagacity, however, have done much towards separating the false from the real; and many substantial facts have been deduced from the shadowy myths or fables in which they lay hid from common eyes.

A similar difficulty has been felt in reference to the early history of the post-apostolic church—a difficulty not yet surmounted. Much, however, has been accomplished in modern times. The misconceptions and mis-statements of partial historians have been investigated and detected by keen eyes. The science of archæology has been built up on better foundations, and by more philosophical methods, than were wont to satisfy less recent writers. The same kind of criticism which effected a revolution of opinion in respect to the early periods of Roman and Grecian history, has been applied to the early periods of ecclesiastical history, and with somewhat similar results. Fables are yielding to facts; assumptions are giving place to well-sifted testimony; and sooner or later a wide-spread revolution must take place in the opinions of all thinking and religious men, in reference to the constitution, duty, and destiny of the church of Christ.

There are still some antiquated theories in con-

* W. S. Landor.

nexion with systems of hierarchical pretension, which retain their hold upon the minds of interested abettors; but on the whole there is good augury for the future, and every fresh discovery is so much gained for the cause of spiritual freedom. The shades of the fathers no longer occupy that place in the temple of truth which was once yielded to them in the spirit of ignorance and servility. They are becoming *familiar* spirits; and the more they are interrogated the less ghostly and the more intelligibly do they reply. Mere names are no longer sufficient to awe mankind into the reception of dogmas inconsistent with the results of scriptural inquiry; and many an oracle through which the priestly spirit had similated the voice of antiquity has become dumb. Ere long, as Milton has expressed it, the world will "quit its clogs," and the church become free.

The testimony of the most learned and impartial of modern ecclesiastical writers is all but unanimous in reference to the fact of the early Independency of the Christian church. Mosheim, the chief of the new school in Christian archæology,* has headed one of his chapters "all the churches of the first age Independent;"† and in another has traced the consequences of departing from a primitive simplicity.‡ Neander, the worthy successor of Mosheim in this department of inquiry, has sufficiently indicated his views in the following terms: "The formation of the

* Gibbon has availed himself largely of what he terms Mosheim's "masterly performance." Decline and Fall, &c., chap. xv.

† De rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum. Sæc. primum, sect. xlviii.

‡ Ibid. sæc. secundum, sect. xxiii.

Christian church, as it developed itself out of the peculiarities of Christianity, must essentially differ from that of all other religious unions. A class of priests, who were to guide all other men under an assumption of their incompetence in religious matters, whose business it was *exclusively* to provide for the satisfaction of the religious wants of the rest of mankind, and to form a link between them and God and godly things; such a class of priests could find no place in Christianity. While the gospel put away that which separated man from God, by bringing all men into the same communion with God through Christ; it also removed that partition wall which separated one man from his fellows, in regard to his more elevated interests. The same High Priest and Mediator for all, through whom all being reconciled and united with God, become themselves a priestly and spiritual race! One heavenly King, Guide, and Teacher, through whom all are taught from God! One faith! one hope! one spirit, which must animate all! one oracle in the hearts of all! the voice of the spirit which proceeds from God! and all citizens of one heavenly kingdom, with whose heavenly powers they have already been sent forth, as strangers in the world! When the apostles introduced the notion of a priest which is found in the Old Testament into Christianity, it was always only with the intention of showing, that no such visible distinct priesthood as existed in the economy of the Old Testament could find admittance into that of the New; that, inasmuch as free access to God and to heaven was once for all opened to the faithful through the one High Priest, Christ, they had become, by union with Him himself, a holy and spiritual people, and their calling was only this, namely, to consecrate

their whole life, as a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the mercy of God's redemption, and to preach the power and grace of Him who had called them from the kingdom of darkness into his wonderful light, and their whole life was to be a continued priesthood, a spiritual serving of God, proceeding from the affections of a faith working by love, and also a continued witness of their Redeemer. Comp. 1 Peter ii. 9. Rom. xii. 1, and the spirit and connexion of ideas throughout the whole epistle to the Hebrews. And thus also the furtherance of God's kingdom, both in general and in each individual community, the furtherance of the propagation of Christianity among the heathen, and the improvement of each particular church, was not to be the concern of a particular chosen class of Christians, but the nearest duty of every individual Christian. Every one was to contribute to this object from the station assigned to him by the invisible head of the church, and by the gifts peculiar to him, which were given him by God, and grounded in his nature—a nature, which retained, indeed, *its individual character*, but was regenerated and ennobled by the influences of the Holy Ghost."* Elsewhere the same author speaks of the first churches as enjoying "a sisterly system of equality," which was afterwards changed into "a system of subordination."† Gieseler‡ and Coleman§ agree with Mosheim and Neander in all that is essential in their views on

* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c.; Rose, vol. i. pp. 180—83.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 208.

‡ Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 92, 93; 108, 109.

§ Coleman's Antiquities, &c., ch. ii. sect. iv., ch. iii. sect. i., vii.

this subject; while a host of names might be adduced from the class of general writers, who have frequently been referred to as candid witnesses for truth.*

We are not content, however, with a reference to modern authorities on a matter of so much importance; but would draw our testimony from the originals. It so happens that they are neither very numerous nor voluminous. "The blessed Christians of those times," says Daille, "contented themselves with writing the Christian faith in the hearts of men, by the beams of their sanctity and holy life, and by their blood shed in martyrdom, without much troubling themselves with the writing of books."† "How do I long," says another author, "for the histories of Hegesippus and Julius Africanus; for the apologies of Aristides, Apollonius, Quadratus and Melito, and the excellent writings of Apollinaris, bishop of Hierapolis! What satisfaction would it be to my soul to understand where Athenagoras, Minutius Felix, and the other brave defenders of religion were born! What testimonies of their courage and learning, their virtue and piety, they gave to the world; and when and by what means they went into the grave, that I might contemplate the beauty of their achievements and celebrate their worth! . . . But these are happinesses only to be enjoyed in wish, and

* *E. g.* Barrow, King, Stillingfleet, &c. See Hanbury's Memorials of the Independents (Introduction), and his Introduction to Hooker's Eccles. Polity, for a large array of modern testimonies; also Vaughan's Preliminary View of the Papal System, prefixed to his Life of Wickliffe. Perhaps the most valuable work on our general subject is Dr. George Campbell's *Lectures on Ecclesiastical History.*

† Right use of the Fathers, Translation, p. 5, London, 1651.

we that cannot be so fortunate must be content with our present portion, and the knowledge that is yet by a benign Providence left us, of that small company of wise and good men that adorned the church."*

Small, however, as may be the amount of contemporaneous testimony that has descended to us from the early periods of ecclesiastical history, it is of great value; indeed, the only testimony worthy of being received as evidence of the condition of the Christian church at that time. Only let us have the conviction that what we have is genuine, that it is really the product of that first age, and then who will not give it a prominent place, as the most important testimony, beyond all comparison, in reference to the practices of those times?

A great mistake has been committed by some in respect to this matter—a mistake, the effect of which is to vitiate the evidence which really exists in reference to primitive periods, by confounding the testimonies spread over many of the early centuries, as if they were all equally trustworthy. How often has Eusebius, for instance, been quoted, although he wrote in the fourth century, as a witness of what took place in the first and second centuries, while Clement and Polycarp, who were contemporaneous witnesses, have been passed by with neglect, if not contempt. Other instances of a similar nature might be adduced; but this is sufficient to show the kind of error which we are anxious to avoid. If anything certain is to be ascertained respecting the gradual changes through which the nominal church of Christ has passed in

* Remarks on the State of the Church of the First Centuries. Dedicated to Dr. Cave, pp. 2, 3. London, 1680.

successive centuries, from the apostolic period to the present, more care must be taken than has often been exhibited, to adhere to contemporaneous testimony in respect to all matters of fact. Even in respect to the first three centuries; to combine the testimonies of Clement and Tertullian, or of Polycarp and Origen, is a great mistake. Why should not the rules of common sense be followed in these, as in all other matters!

What opinion should we form of a modern judge, who refused to receive or slightly passed over the testimony of some old men, whether few or many, in reference to an event which occurred forty years ago, although they were conversant with that event, and delivered their testimony independently of one another; while he willingly received the testimony of younger men, who could not have been conversant with the event, on the sole ground of their having heard certain traditionary tales respecting it? In every rightly constituted law court, a first witness has the first place in all questions of fact; and when only a few eye-witnesses are found to agree in their testimony, yet without suspicion of collusion, their testimony is sufficient to overrule that of hundreds who are mere reporters of traditions, and secondary channels of evidence.

We propose then to place before the reader the testimony of those who lived and wrote in the first age after the apostles, that it may be seen how, for a long time, the apostolic institutions retained their hold upon the churches of Christ. We shall follow the order of time, placing the earliest witnesses first, and leaving those who come after to take their proper place. We shall not allow Tertullian, who wrote in

the second century, nor Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth, to come into court in order to tell us what was the condition of the church in the first; but we shall call up those who lived in the first century, that they may speak for themselves, as to the institutions and customs of their times.

It would occupy too much space to state all the reasons which have influenced modern critics in determining upon the authors whose writings have been received as genuine.* Suffice it to say that the only writers of the first age whose compositions have descended to us in whole or in part, in such a state as to be relied on, are Clement, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. To these some have added Ignatius, who in point of time comes between Clement and Polycarp. We shall add his name, therefore, to the list; but only for the purpose of showing (in the proper place) that the epistles which have been received as his, are unworthy of being admitted by any one who would separate the genuine from the false.

The earliest witness for the Independency of the first post-apostolic period is CLEMENT OF ROME. Very little is known respecting him, excepting what may be gathered from his own writings. While some suppose him to be the Clement mentioned by the apostle Paul as one of his "fellow-labourers," in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Philippians: others either

* Du Pin's Hist. of Ecc. Writers, Jones, fol. 1696, contains a full account of the early writers, genuine, spurious, and lost. Also, Riddle's Christian Antiquities, but more brief. Gieseler's Compendium of Ecc. Hist. in Clarke's Theol. Lib. is very discriminating. But the best for the general reader is Dr. Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, lect. i.

doubt or deny the fact.* All, however, are agreed in giving him a place in the very highest antiquity, as the first Christian writer after the time of the apostles.† It is probable that he died somewhere about or before A.D. 100. He was therefore the contemporary of the apostles, or some of them; of Ignatius, of Apollonius of Tyana, the great champion of heathenism; of Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny—authors whose classic writings have descended to our times.

His official relation to the church of Christ at Rome is a matter of dispute. Whether he was the sole minister of that church, or only one out of many—whether he was appointed to his office by Peter or by others—whether he outlived his fellow ministers, presbyters or bishops, and became sole minister or not—are matters which cannot with certainty be determined. His own writings say nothing on these subjects; and the testimony which has been given comes from periods too low down in the stream of time, and too much interested in a certain class of church opinions, to be received without hesitation. While some have called him the first bishop of Rome, and others have unhesitatingly placed his name on the list of the popes as the first pope of Rome, it is quite a

* Hieronymus, Origen, Eusebius, Epiphanius, affirm this identity, Riddle's Christian Antiquities, p. 4. Neander says, "perhaps" he was the same. A writer in the British Quarterly for Nov. 1846, maintains the contrary opinion with some strong arguments.

† Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, &c, Rose, vol. ii. p. 328, &c. Gieseler's Eccl. Hist. Davidson, vol. i. p. 3. Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, Buch, vol. i. p. 53. Riddle's Christian Antiquities, p. 3. Bennett's Theol. of the early Christian Church, p. 10. The last writer places the Epistle to Diognetus first, but without discovering the name of the author.

matter of uncertainty whether he was ever the sole minister of that church. The advocates of papal supremacy succeed no better with the case of Clement than do the advocates of the dogma of apostolical succession. It is still a matter of dispute whether Peter ever was at Rome or not. If not, how futile all the attempts which have been made to trace the succession of mere ministers in Christ's church up to him! But supposing that Peter did actually preside over the Romish see,* and appoint his episcopal successors, the actual order of succession is still a matter of controversy. According to some, Linus succeeded Peter, and Clement Linus; according to others, Linus succeeded Peter, Anacletus Linus, and Clement Anacletus;† while, according to others, Clement succeeded Peter as the first link in that mysterious chain which keeps up the connection between modern episcopacy and that of primitive times. Bingham, the great referee of modern churchmen, endeavours to make little of this trifling variation. "'T is true," he says, "there is a little difference in the account which these authors give of the succession; for some reckon Linus first, then Anacletus, then Clemens; others begin with Clemens, and reckon him first in order from St. Peter. But this is easily reconciled by learned men, who make it appear that Linus died while St. Peter lived, and that Clemens was ordained their successor by St. Peter also. We have two or three persons, by this account, ordained successively bishops of Rome by the

* Shade of Clement! how would thine ears have tingled to hear thy humble pastoral charge spoken of as a see!

† Irenæus, Adv. Heres. iii. 3. Eusebius, Ecc. Hist. iii. 15. Irenæus mentions all three. Eusebius omits Linus; but mentions the order of Clement as after Anacletus.

hands of the apostles."* The ingenuity of learned men is indisputable, especially when they have a theory to support. Sometimes, however, it overreaches itself, as in the present case. What! Peter *living*, and yet to have one, two, three successors! Incredible! Peter, the first bishop, to appoint in succession three co-bishops —three rival bishops! Do the advocates of succession, and of episcopal rights as founded upon it, admit that St. Peter, though the first, was not the sole bishop of Rome?—that Linus was co-pastor, then Anacletus, then Clement? It is time that the doctrine of succession was given up when it takes this shape.

Our readers, probably, will deem the explanation of Neander much more honest than that of Bingham, even although it savour less of ingenuity. According to this writer, the contradictory accounts respecting the names and succession of the early pastors of the church of Rome, are a proof that the age of innovation had not arrived in Clement's day—that episcopal supremacy and apostolical succession were then unknown things. "The confusion," he writes, "which exists in regard to the succession of the first bishops of Rome, may perhaps also be attributed to this cause, that originally these names (that is, the names *presbyter* and *bishop*) were not so distinguished, and, therefore, many might bear at the same time the names of

* Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, book ii. ch. i. p. 19, fol. 1726. In chap. xiii. p. 54, this author perplexes the question yet more by the admission that in the first age there were frequently two independent bishops in the same city, and in some cases coadjutors also, or co-pastors. He admits that Austin was the first who acted on the principle that two bishops might not be in one church at the same time; and that he acted on this principle because of his strict interpretation of the Nicene canon.

bishops or presbyters." * Well may a modern writer exclaim, "What does *such* a succession prove? If the first link in the chain be wanting which connects it with truly apostolic authority, no evidence of future transmission or continuity can give it the character of apostolicity. It may be regular and uniform, and, from a certain point, uninterrupted; but, like the chain that connects some mighty mechanism of modern construction across the mouth of a river, binding coast to coast, and sustaining all the pressure of intercourse and traffic; if *that* link be wanting which unites it on either side with the solid rock, the massive character of the structure can afford no compensation for the defect, and the first trial betrays the vanity and pretension of the entire fabric. In the judgment of all candid minds, this apostolic chain must appear to be too disconnected at almost every point to be worthy of the name by which it has been designated, and assuredly too weak to bear the burden of ecclesiastical assumption and domination which it has been fabricated to sustain." †

But we have advanced enough, and more than enough, on this point. It is evident that nothing more can be ascertained respecting Clement than that he sustained a ministerial or pastoral relation to the early church at Rome; whether alone, or in conjunction with others, cannot now be affirmed with any degree of certainty, and is of no great importance. It is a matter of much greater moment to select his genuine writings from those which have, at various

* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Relig. &c. vol. i. p. 195, note. See also Riddle's Christian Antiquities, p. 4.

† Lectures on Puseyism, Fletcher's Select Works, vol. ii. p. 479, 480.

times, passed under his name, and thereby done injury to the cause of truth. Happily this task has already been accomplished for us. With scarcely any exception, all critics are now agreed in rejecting every thing that has been connected with his name, excepting his *Epistle to the Corinthians.** This epistle was read aloud, during the first centuries, at Divine service in many of the churches, and was held in high esteem. The occasion of its being written, and the statements which are made in its contents, all corroborate the views we have expressed respecting the independency of the churches of Christ in that early period. It appears that a disturbance had arisen in the bosom of the Corinthian church, from what precise cause is not known. In connexion, however, with that disturbance, some of the pastors had either been deposed from their office, or such a measure had been seriously contemplated. In these circumstances the Corinthian church sends a deputation to Rome, with a letter to the church there, asking for such advice as might be given. Here we pause for a moment to observe that the very occasion and manner of this application from the church at Corinth to the church at Rome is a proof, in part, of the independent character, internally and externally, of the churches of that day. The church at Corinth evidently preserved the principle of congregational Independency internally, since it deposed its own officers, or proposed to do so. It also preserved the same principle externally, since it asked for *advice* only from the church at Rome, and was not interfered with by any ecclesiastical power from with-

* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Relig. &c. vol. ii. pp. 332, 333. Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, lect. i. &c. &c.

out. The circumstance of the church of Corinth sending so far as Rome, and then for advice only, shows clearly enough that it was subject to no diocesan supervision on the one hand, and to no synodical regulations or superintendence on the other.

But the contents of this epistle are more decisive than the circumstances which gave occasion to it. We have spoken of it as the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians; and, probably, it was written by him. But, strictly speaking, it is a letter from the church of which Clement was a minister. It commences thus—"The church of God which sojourns at Rome, to the church of God which sojourns at Corinth."* The name of Clement does not appear at all. What an evidence this of the total absence of all clerical distinctions! What a contrast to modern episcopal assumptions of precedence! What a negation of all papistical pretensions to official pre-eminence in an universal vicarage of Christ! Is Clement of Rome, indeed and of a truth, the first bishop of Rome, and successor of St. Peter? Is he, indeed, pope Clement the first? Humble-minded man! would that his successors were as harmless as he! He does not even mention his own name! He hides himself in the shadow of the church of which he is the meek-hearted minister!

But let us inquire into the contents of the epistle, so far as they may illustrate our subject. It is possible that under cover of so humble an introduction much of hierarchical pretension may creep in unawares. This creeping on the ground and glazing of the tongue

* Ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ παροικοῦσα Ῥώμην, τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ παροικούσῃ Κόρινθον.

may prove only a prelude, as such things often have proved in after times, to spiritual usurpation and fraud. But no! it is not so. The entire epistle is in the same spirit. It is all of a piece. It is human, and therefore imperfect. It contains some far-fetched illustrations, as might be expected from a writer not inspired. Its natural history respecting the phœnix is by no means in accordance with modern notions respecting that marvellous bird. One passage occurs—which some have suspected to be an interpolation—respecting the Levitical priesthood. But still, on the whole, it is a genuine document, and any thing but such as a modern bishop of Rome would write to a church at Corinth.

Of course the reader need not be told, that there is nothing in the epistle which favours the idea of any thing opposed to *aggregate* Independency. In that day of changeful experience, when Christianity was an illicit religion, and Christians were scarcely tolerated as a sect every where spoken against, it was hardly possible for a bishop of Rome even to dream, much less speak, of state patronage and control. Though there were many churches, none of them (as far as this epistle indicates) thought of any secular alliance with the state in any country. They were quite content with being left alone, to conduct their affairs in their own way.

Neither is there in this epistle any thing opposed to the principle of *congregational* Independency, whether external or internal. We have a beautiful example of one Christian family giving advice to another Christian family, when that advice is solicited. The church at Corinth is in trouble, and asks for counsel from the church at Rome, which is cheerfully given—but no-

thing more. Nothing is hereby done whereby the *external* independency of the church at Corinth is violated. No arrangement is implied whereby the families of Christ may be supposed to be brought under one general superintendence and control. Although the church at Rome gives its advice to the church at Corinth, it is in such a spirit as to lead the most superficial reader to infer that each church considered itself upon an equal footing of friendship and love, and that neither sought to exercise domination or undue influence over the other. The troubles which had arisen at Corinth were only a reason for the exhibition of more meekness, sympathy, and brotherly love than usual, on the part of the church at Rome. There is no dogmatism, no threatening, no anathema, in the primitive epistle. All is gentleness and suavity, and the word of God is paramount in all its representations of duty. Such, at least, is our interpretation of the spirit of the epistle.

In respect to the *internal* independency of the congregational church much is advanced. A lovely picture is drawn of the peace and charity which once prevailed amongst the Corinthians, as the result of genuine religious principles pervading all the members. "Ye were all humble-minded, nothing boasting, more willing to be subject than to rule, more pleased to give than to receive. Content with the Divine provisions, and carefully attending His words, ye were enlarged in your sympathies, and His sufferings were before your eyes. Thus a profound and blessed peace was given to all; and an insatiable desire of doing good, and an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit, was upon all. And being full of holy designs, with great earnestness and pious confidence ye stretched

forth your hands to God Almighty, supplicating him to be propitious, if so be in any thing ye had sinned involuntarily. It was your labour night and day on behalf of all the brotherhood, that the number of his elect might be saved, with compassion (on the part of God) and meetness of mind (on theirs). Ye were sincere, and harmless, and forgiving towards one another. All sedition and all schism was an abomination to you. You grieved over the sins of your neighbour, you esteemed their defects as your own. Ye were without grudging in all your beneficence, and ready to every good work. Adorned with a thoroughly virtuous and religious demeanour, ye did all things in the fear of Him; and the statutes and precepts of the Lord were written on the tablets of your hearts."* Afterwards, when through pride and a spirit of contention this community became divided and the scene of peace reversed, nothing is said which indicates that matters may be brought to their original state, by any thing but the spirit of the gospel again pervading all the members of the Corinthian church. No threat is held out that the hand of external or internal power shall compel them to reduce things to a state of order and harmony. No counsel is given to refer their disputes to a synodical court or the decisions of a diocesan bishop. The advice of the church at Rome implies that the Corinthians themselves must commence and effect the desired change. And such is the charity and humility of the church at Rome, that it places itself side by side with the church at Corinth, not merely sympathising with it, but speaking as gently as if it thought that the exhortations

* Sect. ii.

and counsels which are needed by the one were needed by the other also. "Let *us* therefore humble ourselves," is the kind of language employed, "and let *us* do as it is written."* "Let *us*, therefore, hold fast to those who follow peace."† "Let therefore *our* whole body be saved in Christ Jesus, and let each one be subject to his neighbour, according as he is placed by the grace of God. Let not him that is strong despise the weak; and let the weak honour the strong. Let the rich give to the poor; and let the poor thank God that he has given to him by whom his own wants may be supplied. Let the wise man manifest his wisdom, not in words but in good works. Let not the humble bear witness for himself, but let him leave it for another to bear witness respecting him, etc."‡ "In whatever things, therefore, *we* have transgressed, let us ask forgiveness."§ "God is not wanting in anything, brethren, and he requires nothing of any one, but to confess to him. For David, his chosen one, says, etc."‖

These are specimens of the manner of the epistle throughout, in all its exhortations. But more important matters are disclosed in some passages which prove that in that early period there were only two orders of officers in the church of Christ; that these were chosen by the people, and were thus strictly congregational; and that their continuance in office depended upon their character and demeanour. All these points, so essential to the internal Independency of the congregation or church, we now proceed to illustrate from the epistle itself.

* Sect. xiii. † Sect. xv. ‡ Sect. xxxviii. § Sect. li. ‖ Sect. lii.

First, in reference to the point that there were only two orders of officers in the churches of that age, and that these were bishops or presbyters, and deacons. "The apostles brought the gospel to us from the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ from God. Christ, therefore, was sent from God, and the apostles from Christ. Both these were done fittingly according to the will of God. Wherefore, receiving the commandments, and being fully confirmed by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and having faith through the word of God, filled with the Holy Ghost they went forth announcing that the kingdom of God was at hand. Preaching, therefore, through the country regions and the cities, they appointed their first fruits, having tried them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those that should believe. And this not as something new; since a long time before it had been written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus, somewhere, the Scripture says, 'I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.' "* In this passage, bishops and deacons are mentioned as the officers of the church. No third order is re-

* Οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῖν εὐηγγελίσθησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς ἀπο τοῦ Θεοῦ. Ἐξεπέμφθη ὁ Χριστὸς οὖν ἀπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ· ἐγένοντο οὖν ἀμφότερα εὐτάκτως ἐκ θελήματος Θεοῦ. Παραγγελίας οὖν λαβόντες, καὶ πληροφορηθέντες διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ πιστωθέντες ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ, μετὰ πληροφορίας Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, ἐξῆλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ μέλλειν ἔρχεσθαι. Κατὰ χώρας οὖν καὶ πόλεις κηρύσσοντες, καθέστανον τὰς ἀπαρχὰς αὐτῶν, δοκιμάσαντες τῷ Πνεύματι, εἰς ἐπισκόπους καὶ διακόνους τῶν μελλόντων πιστεύειν. Καὶ τοῦτο οὐ καινῶς· ἐκ γὰρ δὴ πολλῶν χρόνων ἐγέγραπτο περὶ ἐπισκόπων καὶ διακόνων· οὕτως γάρ που λέγει η γραφὴ, "Καταστήσω τοὺς ἐπισκόπους αὐτῶν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ, καὶ τοὺς διακόνους αὐτῶν ἐν πίστει."—Sect. xlii. Patres Apostolici. Jacobson, vol i. p. 147—150.

ferred to. On the contrary, by the quotation with which the passage concludes (whether an apt quotation or not, no matter), we infer that in the mind of Clement, or rather in the opinion of the church in whose name he wrote, the two offices of bishops and deacons were a matter of Divine institution and pre-appointment. If it be asked whether mention is not made of presbyters in any part of the epistle, the answer is, certainly; but in such a manner as to show that in the mind of Clement, presbyters and bishops were one and the same. In the following passage, which succeeds almost immediately the one just quoted, he uses the two names in this manner. "Our apostles also knew, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be contention respecting the name of the bishop's office. And so for this purpose, having obtained a perfect fore-knowledge, they appointed [nominated] those we have just mentioned, and afterwards gave direction that when those persons died, other proved men should succeed to their service. Those, therefore, who were appointed [nominated] by them, or afterwards by other eminent men, with the approval of the whole church, and who have served the flock of Christ unblameably, with humility, peaceably and not illiberally, and well reported of all for many years,—such persons we think cannot in justice be cast out of office. For it is with us no small sin, if we cast from the office of bishop those who have unblameably and holily used their gifts. Blessed are the presbyters who, having finished their course, have obtained a fruitful and perfect dismissal; for they have no fear lest any one should depose them from their appointed place. For we see how you have dis-

placed some who conducted themselves well, from their irreproachable and honoured post of service."*

It is evident from this passage, and from others in which a similar reference is made, that bishops and presbyters were only two names of one and the same office. It is further evident from the reference which is made to the church's part in the choice of officers, that the power of election was in the body of the congregation, while the proposal or nomination of certain persons as candidates for office might come from certain eminent individuals;† just as in our modern election of members of parliament, some eminent person or persons nominate, while the people elect by their suffrages. It is also further evident from the very admissions respecting the character and demea-

* Καὶ οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἡμῶν ἔγνωσαν διὰ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι ἔρις ἔσται ἐπὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς. Διὰ ταύτην οὖν τὴν αἰτίαν πρόγνωσιν εἰληφότες τελείαν, κατέστησαν τοὺς προειρημένους, καὶ μεταξὺ ἐπινομὴν δεδώκασιν, ὅπως εἂν κοιμηθῶσιν, διαδέξωνται ἕτεροι δεδοκιμασμένοι ἄνδρες τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτῶν. Τοὺς οὖν κατασταθέντας ὑπ' ἐκείνων, ἢ μεταξὺ ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐλλογίμων ἀνδρῶν, συνευδοκησάσης τῆς ἐκκλησίας πάσης, καὶ λειτουργήσαντας ἀμέμπτως τῷ ποιμνίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ ταπεινοφροσύνης, ἡσύχως καὶ ἀβαναύσως, μεμαρτυρημένους τε πολλοῖς χρόνοις ὑπὸ πάντων, τούτους οὐ δικαίως νομὶζομεν ἀποβαλέσθαι τῆς λειτουργίας. Ἁμαρτία γὰρ οὐ μικρὰ ἡμῖν ἔσται, ἐὰν τοὺς ἀμέμπτως καὶ ὁσίως προσενεγκόντας τὰ δῶρα, τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποβάλωμεν. Μακάριοι οἱ προοδοιπορήσαντες πρεσβύτεροι, οἵτινες ἔγκαρπον καὶ τελείαν ἔσχον τὴν ἀνάλυσιν· οὐ γὰρ εὐλαβοῦνται μή τις αὐτοὺς μεταστήσῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἱδρυμένου αὐτοῖς τόπου. Ὁρῶμεν γὰρ ὅτι ἐνίους ὑμεῖς μεταγάγετε καλῶς πολιτευομένους, ἐκ τῆς ἀμέμπτως αὐτοῖς τετιμημένης λειτουργίας.—Sect. xliv. Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. i. p. 154—160.

† Even in Cyprian's time this was the method. Ep. 52. The bishop was chosen by nomination or testimony of the clergy (de clericorum testimonis), but by the suffrages of the people (de plebis suffragio).

nour of such officers as may not be cast out of office, that the people had the *power* of casting them out without justifiable cause even, and much more when there was good reason for it. It is scarcely needful to add, that the whole tenor of the epistle shows that there was no idea in that day of a bishop whose office was not confined exclusively to one congregation or church: namely, that in which he was chosen to serve, and to whom he was amenable for his conduct.

Such is the testimony of the first witness whose writings have descended to our times! Can anything be more decisive as to the practice of the churches in the earliest times? Can anything be more express as to the Independency of the churches of Christ in the very first period succeeding that in which the apostles lived and laboured? The stream still runs pure and uncorrupted, as at its source. The platform of the church's constitution still remains, as it had been erected by those infallible master-builders, the inspired apostles!

The next witness in the order of time would be IGNATIUS, if any confidence could be placed in the epistles which have been circulated in his name. Such, however, are the universal admissions respecting the interpolated character of these epistles, and the results of more recent discoveries respecting them, that the only certain way of proceeding, if we would ascertain the truth, is to reject them from the evidence altogether. What court of law would listen to witnesses who have been manifestly tampered with, when honest witnesses are at hand? As, however, much stress has been laid by some upon the contents of these writings, we shall lay before our readers as clear a statement as we are able to furnish of the

reasons which induce us to reject them in reference to our present subject.

Respecting Ignatius himself, there has been the same difference of opinion, as to the order of his coming to the office of bishop of Antioch, that we noticed in reference to Clement of Rome. Some reckon him first, some second, some third bishop of the church in that place; and although Bingham,* as usual, attempts to reconcile the discrepant testimonies, we think it only another evidence of a plurality of bishops in the churches of those days.† All that

* Bingham, book ii. chap. ii. "If we pass to Antioch, then we find Euodius first, and after him Ignatius, ordained bishops by the hands of the apostles. Baronius and some others fancy that they sat both at the same time; the one as bishop of the Jews, and the other of the Gentiles: but Eusebius says expressly that Euodius was the first and Ignatius the second, after Euodius was dead; and it is agreed by all ancient writers that they were both consecrated before St. Peter's death. Of Euodius there can be no question made, if it appear that Ignatius was ordained in his room. Now this is most expressly said by Theodoret, that he received the gift of the high-priesthood (! !) αρχιερωσύνης χαριν, from the hand of the great St. Peter. In like manner, Chrysostom in his encomium upon him says, he does not only admire him, because he was thought worthy of so high a degree; but that he was ordained to it by those holy men, and had the hand of the blessed apostles laid upon his sacred head. The same is said in effect by Athanasius, when he calls him the first bishop of Antioch after the apostles; and Origen, who calls him the second after St. Peter, and Jerom the third: *for though they count differently, yet they mean the same thing;* that Ignatius was ordained successor to Euodius while the apostles lived, and so might be called either second or third after the apostles, *according as St. Peter and Euodius were included or excluded out of the number.*"

† Clarkson's Select Works, p. 118. "Ecclesiastical writers do so contradict one another as renders their testimonies of little value. . . . . Some modern authors of great eminency, both Protestants,

we can know with certainty respecting Ignatius is, that he was one of the ministers of the church at Antioch * in a very early period of the post-apostolic age, and that he died somewhere about the year A.D. 116,† a martyr to the Christian faith. "In the time of the Emperor Trajan," says Neander, in his cautious manner, "it would appear that he was carried as prisoner to Rome, where he expected to be exposed to wild beasts. On the journey, it would seem he wrote seven epistles; six to the churches of Asia Minor, and one to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. Certainly, these epistles contain passages which at least bear completely upon them the character of antiquity. This is particularly the case with the passages directed against Judaism and Docetism; but even the shorter and more trustworthy edition is *very much interpolated*."‡

Such is the testimony of Neander some time back. Since then a Syriac version of three of the epistles of Ignatius has been brought to light,§ which confirms

and Papists (not only Baronius, but Dr. Hammond), find no more tolerable way to reconcile them, than by asserting that there were more bishops than one there at once, which quite blasts the conceit of a diocesan church there."

* Biblical Review, Jan. 1846, p. 17.

† Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, p. 18, mentions nearly all the different dates which have been fixed upon.

‡ Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., vol. ii. p. 334.

§ Biblical Review, Jan. 1846, p. 22. "In the years 1838 and 1839, the Rev. Henry Tattam procured from the same monastery in the desert of Nitria, which Huntington had visited in the seventeenth century, some very ancient Syriac manuscripts, which were brought to England and deposited in the British Museum. They were immediately examined with anxious care by Mr. Cureton, of the museum, to ascertain if any of the epistles of Ignatius were among them; and the result of his examination was the discovery, not only of several extracts from these epistles, cited by ecclesiastical

the opinion of the most eminent critics respecting the character of those Greek editions (one a shorter and the other a longer form), which have hitherto been in circulation. Many have been the disputes, and fierce the contests of partizans and critics from the time of the Reformation downwards, respecting these Greek editions, their comparative value, and their actual worth as faithful transmissions from the earliest ages of ecclesiastical history; and now this Syriac version comes to light to confirm the opinion generally entertained respecting the untrustworthy character of both. The following statement from an able pen will set the merits of the case in a clear light, and in as few words as are needful, in a matter respecting which so much confusion and controversy have arisen.

"Let us glance again at the literary history of the

writers, but also of the entire Epistle to Polycarp. Having obtained a grant of money from the Treasury for the purpose, the trustees of the British Museum engaged Mr. Tattam to pay another visit to the monastery of the desert of Nitria, in order to obtain the remainder of its valuable collection of Syriac manuscripts. These manuscripts arrived safely in the British Museum in the spring of 1843, and among them were found three entire Epistles of Ignatius,—to St. Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and to the Romans. These epistles have been recently published in the Syriac with an English translation by Mr. Cureton, who has also prefixed a valuable introduction respecting the literary history of the epistles, to which we are indebted for some of the preceding remarks. His work is entitled, 'The Ancient Syriac Version of the Epistles of St. Ignatius—to St. Polycarp, to the Ephesians, and the Romans; together with extracts from his Epistles, collected from the writings of Severus of Antioch, Timotheus of Alexandria, and others: edited with an English translation and notes; also the Greek text of these three Epistles, corrected according to the authority of the Syriac version.'"

epistles. First was published the longer Greek text, which contained such manifest interpolations, that Calvin—no mean judge in matters of criticism—declared that nothing could be more silly than the stuff which had been brought out under the name of Ignatius. More than a century afterwards appeared the shorter Greek text, omitting most of the passages of the longer text, which bore the strongest marks of the fabrication of a later age, but still retaining much which has been judged spurious by some of the best critics of modern times. Last of all, we have a third recension of the text, in the Syriac version now before us, again omitting most of the passages that were judged spurious in the shorter Greek text, but likewise in its turn retaining some of them. Why, then, should this last recension be regarded as immaculate? Why should not the same principles of criticism be applied to this Syriac version as were applied, first to the longer Greek text, and subsequently to the shorter? We see no reason why a distinction should be drawn between them, and why the Syriac recension should receive the favour which was denied to the two others. The fact that the quotations made by Irenæus and Eusebius from the epistles of Ignatius, are found in the Syriac version, is no proof that the Syriac recension is the same as the one used by those writers; these quotations are far too few to enable us to judge of the nature and form of the epistles which were used by Irenæus and Eusebius. Having, then, no external testimony to determine the dispute, we are again thrown back upon the epistles themselves, and we there find passages which it seems to us almost certain that Ignatius could never have written. We confine ourselves to two striking instances.

"The first example which we take is the passage from the epistle to Polycarp, which has been already given and of which the Syriac version is as follows: 'Look to the bishop, that God may also look upon you. I will be instead of the souls of those who are subject to the bishops and the presbyters and deacons; with them may I have a portion with God.'—The Syriac Version, pp. 8, 9.

"Independently of all other considerations, which will at once occur to our readers, we may just mention two *facts*, which render it very probable that this passage is an interpolation; first, it is the only place in which all the three orders of the clergy are mentioned; and secondly, it occurs in the midst of a personal address to a single individual, Polycarp, and it is, therefore, most strange for the writer all at once to break off the address to the person to whom he is writing, and to exclaim, 'Look to the bishop, that God also may look to you.'

"In the epistle to the Ephesians, the writer makes a slip which indubitably betrays the interpolator:—'I rejoice in you, and I offer supplication on account of you, Ephesians, *a church which is renowned in all ages!*'—p. 13.

"Surely, Ignatius, who was put to death, at the latest calculation, in A.D. 116, could not have spoken in this way of a church which had not existed more than sixty or seventy years; but one can easily understand why a later writer should have bestowed such praise upon a church, the bishop of which was the metropolitan of all the churches in the province of Asia, and enjoyed the rights and privileges of a patriarch; naturally, therefore, would a later writer speak of the church of Ephesus as one renowned in all ages. It is

by incidental remarks of this kind that we are almost always able to detect the interpolator. It would be easy to bring forward other passages which we regard to be interpolations, but we think that these are sufficient to prove the object we have in view; which is merely to show that these Syriac epistles cannot be regarded as a faithful representation of what Ignatius wrote.

"Our opinion upon the whole controversy is briefly this. It appears certain, from the testimony of Polycarp, who must have known the fact, that Ignatius wrote some letters while on his journey from Antioch to Rome to suffer martyrdom. These letters, however, must naturally have been very brief, from the circumstances in which the martyr was placed, since he was strictly guarded by Roman soldiers, of whose cruelty he complains bitterly in his epistle to the Romans, and who, therefore, would not have been likely to allow him much time for the composition of letters. In the fierce persecutions to which the church at Antioch was afterwards so often exposed, these epistles of the great martyr would naturally have been secreted by the bishop or some of the presbyters, that they might not fall into the hands of the heathen; and, as we see from the number of apocryphal Christian writings that have come down to us, that it early became the practice to forge works and attribute them to some early saint or martyr, it is not surprising that those who had the custody of the Ignatian epistles should have been anxious to obtain the authority of the early bishop of their church on points of Christian discipline and doctrine, which he had neglected to mention. We believe that they therefore foisted into his epistles passages bearing upon these points; and

it likewise appears to us very probable that they added others which had no direct bearing upon any controverted point, merely for the purpose of lengthening the epistles, and thus giving to the church more of the sentiments and opinions of the holy martyr. We therefore think that the three different recensions of the epistles contain a *ground-work*, which was really written by Ignatius, and that to this various passages were added from time to time, probably some at a very early, and some, certainly, at a very late period. We do not pretend to determine or even to conjecture the times at which these various additions were made, but we believe that the Syriac version exhibits the text at a period when comparatively few interpolations had been made; that the shorter Greek text belongs to a later age, when more numerous interpolations had crept in; and that the longer Greek text represents a still more recent time, and exhibits a still greater number of all kinds of interpolations."*

On the grounds contained in the preceding statement, we think we are abundantly justified in rejecting the so-called epistles of Ignatius as unworthy to be trusted in respect to a point which requires unimpeachable evidence. In such an inquiry as the one we are pursuing in this chapter, only contemporary testimony should be taken. If then the writings of Ignatius have been so dealt with as to be a transcript of the minds of churchmen of the third and fourth centuries, rather than of the author whose name they bear; are we not bound in justice to pass them by as documents which cannot be received in evidence? As we proceed to other witnesses we shall

* Biblical Review, for Feb. 1846, pp. 110—113. See also appendix B.

see the propriety of this course. Nothing can be more in harmony than the testimony of Clement and Polycarp, who, in point of time, came after Ignatius; whereas the style, and spirit, and sentiments, of the Ignatian epistles, in many passages at least, suit a much later period in the history of the church. The "pious frauds," as they have been termed, committed by aspiring churchmen, in periods of innovation on apostolic institutions, may have served for a season to perplex, if not to mislead the inquirer into the character of the church's constitution in the first age; like a stone cast upwards in the stream of time, they may have disturbed the purity of its early flow, and have given occasion to doubt and misgiving respecting the real course of things at that precise period: but the truth will come out at last, and when the source of disturbance is removed, and the stream once more resumes its own appropriate channel, it will be seen how calm and pure the current as we approach the fountain head!

We pass on then to the next witness, in point of time, POLYCARP of Smyrna. Little is known with certainty respecting his birth-place, parentage, early education, the time of his appointment, and the order of his succession to the pastoral office, in the ancient church of Smyrna. As we have observed in reference to Clement and Ignatius, so we may observe in reference to Polycarp, that the precise period and order of his accession to episcopal office cannot be well ascertained. It would seem, from the statements of some, that he had been a disciple and companion of the apostle John, whom in spirit he much resembled. Although he sustained office at Smyrna during the almost incredibly long period of seventy-four years,

little has been recorded respecting him on which any reliance may be placed, until we come to the closing period of his life. The account of his martyrdom, contained in an epistle written not long after his death, in the name of the church of Smyrna, is one of the most interesting statements to be found in the records of ecclesiastical antiquity. The entire document is too lengthy to be inserted here. The following particulars, however, may not be out of place.

In the seventh year of the reign of Marcus Antoninus, or A.D. 167, the storm of persecution, which had varied in its severity for some years, increased into a tempest at the time of the proposed expedition against the Marcomanni. To propitiate their deities the heathen Romans waged a fierce war against the Christians, and Smyrna was not exempt from the calamity. Many sealed their faith with their blood. The cry was heard a short season after the storm began: 'Let Polycarp be sought for!' The venerable man was too high and holy a professor of the Christian faith not to be singled out as a victim. He did not court martyrdom, however, but prudently acting upon the advice of his friends, avoided his persecutors so long as he could do so in an honourable way. He sought refuge first in one and then in another village, in the neighbourhood of Smyrna, in the latter of which he permitted himself to be seized. He even came down from the upper story of the house where he was secreted, as soon as he heard that the officers had come to apprehend him, saying, 'God's will be done.' He invited them to partake of his hospitality, and begged as the only favour, an undisturbed hour for prayer. The fulness of his heart carried him on in his devotions more than twice that time; and even the heathen

were touched by his sincerity and fervour. He was then conducted into Smyrna, where the chief officer of police and another met him, invited him into their chariot, and sought in an apparently kind manner to undermine his constancy, saying, 'What harm can it be for you to say, *Our Lord the Emperor*, and to offer up sacrifices?' Polycarp at first was silent; but when pressed yet further, calmly replied, 'I will not do as you advise me.' On this they grew angry, used many contemptuous expressions towards him, threw him out of the chariot, and severely injured him. Not resenting their conduct, he hastened on under the conduct of his guards, as if nothing had happened. When he appeared before the pro-consul, the latter asked him to recant, 'Regard,' he said, 'thy great age; swear by the genius of Cæsar, say, *take away the impious;* curse Christ, and I will set you free.' The old man replied, 'Eighty and six years have I served Him, and have received only good at His hands, how can I now blaspheme Him, my King, and my Saviour?' He was still pressed, and still was firm; 'I am a Christian,' said he, 'If you desire to know what Christianity is, appoint an hour and hear me.' 'Only persuade the people,' said the pro-consul, 'and you are safe.' But Polycarp would not condescend to render an account to any but the powers ordained by God. In vain did the pro-consul threaten him with death by the wild beasts, and by the funeral pile. Polycarp was firm. He was publicly announced by the herald as one who had *confessed himself a Christian.* The tumultuous mob demanded that he should be sacrificed; they eagerly collected the wood for the pile, seized the victim, and were about to bind him to it; 'Leave me, I pray, unfastened,' said the

courageous martyr, 'He who has enabled me to endure the fire will give me strength also to remain firm at the stake.' And there, bound, before his spirit rose aloft through the flames, he uttered his last prayer: 'O Lord! Almighty God! the Father of thy beloved son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received a knowledge of Thee! God of the angels, and of the whole creation, of the whole human race, and of the saints, who live before thy presence! I thank thee that thou hast thought me worthy, this day and this hour, to share the cup of thy Christ among the number of thy witnesses.' To conclude in the words of the epistle referred to—"Such are the events which relate to the blessed Polycarp, who though the twelfth of those who, together with those of Philadelphia, suffered martyrdom, is alone remembered of all men, so as to be spoken of by the very Gentiles themselves, in every place, not only as an eminent teacher, but also as a glorious martyr; whose dying testimony all desire to imitate, as having been every way conformable to the gospel of Christ. For having by patience overcome the unjust governor, and so received the crown of immortality, he now, together with the apostles, and all other righteous men who have gone before, with great triumph glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord, the Saviour of our souls, and governor of our bodies, and shepherd of the whole church which is in all the earth."*

It is related by Irenæus,† who was a disciple of Polycarp, that this venerable man wrote many epis-

* Της Σμυρναιων Εκκλησιας περι μαρτυριον του αγιου Πολυκαρπου.—Sect. 19.

† Apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. 20.

tles in the course of his ministry, both to private individuals and churches. But all of these have been lost, with the exception of one to the Philippians. The mere names of some, and fragments of others have been preserved, but nothing more.* So that this one epistle is all that we can reckon upon as certainly his; and this is not entire. Some, indeed, have endeavoured to impugn the genuineness even of this, or at least of certain portions of it, but without success. In the present day it is almost universally received as an authentic memorial of the first age of ecclesiastical history. It is probable that the epistle in question was composed soon after the death of Ignatius, or somewhere about the year A.D. 117; and when we remember the intimacy which existed between Ignatius and Polycarp, it affords another proof that the epistles which have been circulated in the name of Ignatius are not his, but the forgeries of later times. For in this epistle there are no sentiments similar to those contained in the Ignatian epistles, in reference to the distinction between presbyters and bishops, and the pre-eminence of the church's rulers. The whole epistle, on the contrary, breathes the same spirit as that of Clement to the Corinthians, and contains nothing opposed to the Independent constitution of the churches of Christ in that day. We proceed to adduce examples in confirmation of these opinions.

In the first place, the superscription of the epistle contains no pretensions to episcopal pre-eminence on the part of Polycarp. He speaks of himself as one of the presbyters or elders of the church at Smyrna, and nothing more. "Polycarp and his fellow presbyters

* Wake's Genuine Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, p. 123.

(or, and those who with him are presbyters),* to the church of God which sojourns at Philippi; mercy to you and peace from God omnipotent and the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, be multiplied." What can be more simple and unostentatious than this? If Polycarp had been the kind of bishop which some have supposed, we should no doubt have found him writing in another style, and every reader of his epistles would have known that there was at least some distinction between a bishop and his presbyters.

In the next place, we find no allusion to the three orders of bishops, priests, and deacons in any portion of this primitive letter. On the contrary, every reference to officers shows that they formed in that day two classes, and two only. In section five, for example, after mentioning some evils which the Philippians as Christians were to avoid, he adds—"Wherefore it is necessary to abstain from all these things, being subject to your presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ."† Whatever interpretation may be put upon the last clause (and it is probable that it only refers to the Divine sanction given to the official distinctions in the church), it is plain that there were at this time only two orders of officers in the church at Philippi; even as there were in the days of the apostle Paul, when he addressed his epistle to "the church at Philippi, with its bishops and deacons." When exhorting the Christians at Philippi to render that subjection to their officers which was due, he would not have omitted to mention their bishop, of all others, if there had

* Πολυκάρπος καὶ οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ πρεσβύτεροι.

† Διὸ δέον απεχεσθαι ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων, ὑποτασσομένους τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις καὶ διακόνοις, ὡς Θεῷ καὶ Χριστῷ·—Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. ii. p. 496.

been such an officer in distinction from the presbyters. The next section (§ vi) confirms this position, and affords proof that the bishops and presbyters were one and the same person; since it speaks of presbyters as exercising the functions of the bishop. The following are Polycarp's words—"And let the presbyters be compassionate, merciful to all, converting them from their errors, visiting (looking after, as a bishop) all the sick, not forgetting the widows, the orphans, and the needy."* These and other duties enjoined upon the presbyters are such as appertain to the bishop; and while they are all urged home on the presbyters, not a syllable is written respecting their being subject to a superior officer, bearing the exclusive name of bishop in the Philippian church. He does say respecting Christ—"Let *us* serve Him in fear and with all reverence;"† again placing himself on an equal footing with the presbyters; but he gives no hint anywhere respecting the duty of presbyters to their superiors, nor of bishops to their subordinates. This is all very singular, if, as some affirm, the episcopal office and functions were in those days distinct from those of the presbyters or elders.

But there is a third point, more important than either of the former, illustrated by this letter. This respects the power of the churches in that age to elect, depose, and restore to office again, their own ministers. The portion of the epistle in which this is found is not preserved in the Greek, but in the Latin translation;

* Καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι δὲ εὔσπλαγχνοι, εἰς πάντας ἐλεήμονες, ἐπιστρέφοντες τὰ ἀποπεπλανημένα, ἐπισκεπτόμενοι πάντας ἀσθενεῖς, μὴ ἀμελοῦντες χήρας, ἢ ὀρφανοῦ, ἢ πένητος·—Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, ii. 497, 498.

† Οὕτως οὖν δουλεύσωμεν αὐτῷ μετὰ φόβου καὶ πάσης εὐλαβείας.—Ibid. p. 498.

no doubt, however, is cast over it as a genuine transcript of the statements and sentiments contained in the original. It is certainly not such a passage as the interpolators of after times would think of forging in order to serve their high-church purposes. "I am greatly afflicted," says Polycarp, "for Valens, who was formerly made a presbyter amongst you, that he should so little understand the office which was given him. I admonish you, therefore, that ye abstain from covetousness, and that ye be chaste and truth-telling. Keep yourselves from all evil But he that cannot govern himself in respect to these things, how can he pronounce this commandment to others? If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he is not free from the charge of idolatry, and shall be judged as one of the heathen. But who are ignorant of the judgment of the Lord? *Do we not know that the saints shall judge the world*, as Paul teaches? But I have neither perceived nor heard anything of this kind in you, amongst whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are named in the beginning of his epistle. For he glories in you amongst all the churches, which at that time were the only ones that knew God; for we did not then know him. Therefore, brethren, I am exceedingly sorry both for him and for his wife, to whom the Lord grant a true repentance. Therefore, be ye also moderate in this matter: and do not regard such as if they were enemies, but call them back as frail and erring members, that ye may save your whole body. By so doing you will edify your own selves."*

* Nimis contristatus sum pro Valente, qui Presbyter factus est aliquando apud vos: quod sic ignoret is locum, qui datus est ei. Moneo itaque vos ut abstineatis ab avaritia, et sitis casti et veraces. Abstinete vos ab omni malo. Qui autem in his non potest se gu-

Who can read this passage, and fail to perceive that the church at Philippi was a self-governed church? Valens had been a presbyter, but had been deposed from his office on account of some great delinquency; nay, more, had been excluded from the church, since both himself and his wife are placed in the same category as persons who might be called back again to fellowship after repentance. That the Philippian church had deposed and excluded Valens is evident, from the exhortation addressed to it respecting him; and that the Philippian church had the recognized power of restoring him to his former position is evident from the desire of Polycarp conveyed in express words. Nothing is said respecting the election of presbyters, in the first instance; but may it not be certainly inferred, that the church which had power to depose from office, and restore to office again, had also the power of making the original choice? Thus this portion of the Epistle to the Philippians confirms the views we have propounded in the former portion of our work, respecting the internal independency of the

bernare, quo modo alii [aliis?] pronunciat hoc? Si quis non abstinuerit se ab avaritia, ab idolotria coinquinabitur; et tanquam inter gentes judicabitur, qui autem ignorant judicium Domini? *An nescimus, quia sancti mundum judicabunt?* sicut Paulus docet. Ego autem nihil tale sensi in vobis, vel audivi, in quibus laboravit beatus Paulus; qui estis in principio Epistolæ ejus. De vobis etenim gloriatur in omnibus Ecclesiis, quæ Deum solæ tunc cognoverant: nos autum nondum noveramus. Valde ergo, fratres, contristor pro illo et pro conjuge ejus: quibus det Dominus pœnitentiam veram. Sobrii ergo estote et vos in hoc; et non sicut inimicos tales existimetis, sed sicut passibilia membra et errantia eos revocate; ut omnium vestrum corpus salvetis. Hoc enim agentes, vos ipsos ædificatis."—Patres Apostolici, Jacobson, vol. ii. pp. 506—8.

congregational church in the apostolic and primitive age. It is, moreover, equally apparent that every church at this time (if we may judge of all by one) was a complete society in itself, subject to no external authority in any shape whatever, and bound by no laws save those of Christ. There are no symptoms at present of diocesan supervision or synodical interference or superintendence. Such men as Polycarp might write to any of the churches, giving advice either of their own free will, and in token of their affection, or at the request of the churches themselves. But it was only advice, and in no way authoritative. In that day of simple faith and primitive intercommunion, friendly offices were not suspected of any sinister purpose, and therefore were cheerfully accepted and gratefully acknowledged.

There is yet another point illustrated in this ancient epistle, which is worthy of notice, because it introduces us to an acquaintance with the practical working and efficacy of the simple social organization then existing in relation to church affairs. We refer to the frequent appeals on the part of Polycarp to the Scriptures, as the only authoritative guide and rule for Christian men. We omitted to notice the same circumstance in connexion with the Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, although we might have done so.* Polycarp is also express in his references to the written Word, and the tone of his address is such as to lead to the conclusion, that in his day every Christian enjoyed his own individual independency, and was taught to

* Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, sect. vii.—xii., &c.; sect. xlvii., where he refers to Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians; sect. liii., where he says, "Ye know full well the holy Scriptures, and have thoroughly searched the oracles of God."

consult the Scriptures as the only authoritative and infallible rule of life. Considering the brevity of his epistle, the quotations in it from the New Testament Scriptures are very considerable. If this be a fair specimen of the manner in which the Christians of that day wrote to one another, as it probably is, there must have been a very general and intimate acquaintance with the writings of the apostles, and a perfect knowledge of their authority as contrasted with the puerilities composed by other men. But while the entire epistle is studded with the bright gems extracted from Scripture, there are also references of a direct character to the state of sentiment in the Christian church at Corinth, in respect to the authority of inspired men and their writing. "Neither I," is the language of the third section, "nor any other such as I am, is able to come up to the wisdom of the blessed and renowned Paul, who, when he was amongst you, through the persons of those who then lived,* taught accurately and with certainty the word of truth, and who, on leaving you, wrote letters, into which, if you look, you will be able to be built up in the faith delivered to you, which is the mother of us all,† when followed by hope, and accompanied [led forth] by love both towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour. For if any one be within the circle of these things, he has fulfilled the law of righteousness;‡ for he who has love is far from all sin." What reader of these words can doubt respecting the estimate

* ἐν ὑμῖν κατὰ πρόσωπον τῶν τότε ἀνθρώπων.

† εἰς τὴν δοθεῖσαν ὑμῖν πίστιν, ἥτις ἐστὶ μήτηρ πάντων ἡμῶν. . . . So that Polycarp knew nothing of "mother church;" but a good deal of "mother faith!"

‡ Ἐὰν γάρ τις τούτων ἐντος ᾖ, πεπλήρωκεν ἐντολὴν δικαιοσυνης.

which Polycarp formed of himself as a merely human and fallible teacher, in comparison with such men as Paul? What reader can doubt that the Christians of those days—at least those of Smyrna and Philippi—were taught to regard the word of truth, and the faith once delivered unto the saints, as the only authoritative thing by which the church could be edified—the only real mother of Christian men? What reader can doubt that it was the one aim of both ministers and people to conform themselves, not to church notions and assumptions of clerical precedence and laic subordination, but to those things, within the circle of whose operation rightousness was to be obtained?

So far is Polycarp from placing himself between Christ's people and Christ's word, as if he had the authority of a dogmatizing interpreter, that he does not even write a letter to the Philippians without an express disclaimer of all such assumption. "These things, brethren," he says, "I was not moved by myself to write to you concerning righteousness; but because you before invited me."* And, at the close of the epistle, he speaks of their "commands" as being obeyed by him.† Indeed, such is the humility of this ancient bishop or presbyter of the Church of Christ, that he disparages his own knowledge of the Scriptures in comparison with that of the Scripture-loving members of the church at Philippi. "For I believe," he says, "that you are well exercised in the sacred Scriptures, and that nothing is hidden from you; but at present this is not granted to me."‡

* Ταῦτα, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐμαυτῷ ἐπιτρέψας γράφω ὑμῖν περὶ τῆς δικαιοσύνης· ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ὑμεῖς προεπεκαλέσασθέ με.—Sect. iii.

† Sect. xiii.

‡ Sect. xii. Confido enim vos bene exercitatos esse in sacris literis, et nihil vos latet; mihi autem non est concessum modo.

Here, then, is another witness, whose testimony establishes the fact of the independency of Christian men and churches in the first post-apostolic age! We have heard the venerable Polycarp speak for himself. His words may not be many; but they are sufficient to show the condition of the Christian world in his time. No other contemporary witness comes into court to contradict him; and we are satisfied therefore with putting his evidence on record, as so much clear gain to the cause of religious liberty and truth.

Before we proceed to the next witness for this age, we must notice a circumstance in relation to the value of the last, which ought not to be overlooked. The Epistle to the Philippians, from which all our quotations have been made, was written, it has been supposed by the first critics, about the year A.D. 117, or soon after the martyrdom of Ignatius. Polycarp, however, did not suffer until the year A.D. 167, or fifty years after. The question occurs,, how far does the testimony delivered in A.D. 117 afford evidence of the state of the churches in this age? Shall we carry it on through the intervening half century, or is there any additional evidence drawn from other sources, which limits the chronological relations of this? Is there any ground to believe that Polycarp, in A.D. 167, was changed from what his own testimony assures us he was in A.D. 117?—or that the churches of Smyrna and Philippi changed their constitution during this prolonged period?

In reply to such questions as these, we must state our opinion that the causes of an incipient change were here and there at work during this interval, as we shall show in our next chapter; but there is no direct evidence to show that any actual change had

transpired. There is certainly no evidence to prove that Polycarp altered his views in respect to church organization; neither is it at all likely that those churches with which he enjoyed so much intercommunion, would easily depart from their primitive institutions during his lifetime. Whatever errors and heresies might spring up, and whatever indications might now and then appear of the budding of a worldly or ambitious spirit,* still the actual framework of the church's organization remained unimpaired.

This testimony of Polycarp, then, takes us over a long period of time, and brings us to that of JUSTIN MARTYR, who was contemporary with the latter part of the life of the former, and died soon after, or about A.D. 167. Much controversy has been held on the subject of his writings, their date, and genuineness; and therefore we should not call him in as a witness, were it not our main object to show that there is nothing in that portion of his writings which relates to the practice of the churches, that indicates a departure from the simple congregational principle. He was born in Samaria, in the town called Flavia Neapolis, then a Greek colony, in which the Greek language prevailed. He was a philosopher, and became a Christian for the following reason, as he re-

* For example—it is related by Irenæus (apud Euseb. iv. 13,) that there was a controversy concerning Easter about the year A.D. 158, in which Anicetus of Rome shewed some portion of that dogmatic spirit which afterwards grew in the breast of the Roman bishops, until it became despotic. On that occasion, according to Irenæus, Polycarp had sufficient influence to preserve the liberties of the churches, and even to soothe Anicetus into good humour and fellowship.—Cave's Lives of the Apostles, vol. i. 198.

lates in his own words. "While I still found my delight in the doctrines of Plato, and heard the Christians calumniated, but yet saw them fearless of death and every thing that men deem fearful, I learnt that it was impossible that they should live in sin and lust. I despised the opinion of the multitude; I was proud of being a Christian, and I endeavoured with all my powers to remain one."* The history of his conversion is related by himself in various particulars, too numerous to be mentioned, and unnecessary for our purpose.† Suffice it to say that he became the author of a considerable number of writings, mostly apologetic. His philosophy in some things perverted his views of the gospel; and while he sought to recommend the truth by the exhibition of its philosophic accuracy and harmony, he almost necessarily marred some of its features in so doing.

What principally concerns us, however, is the testimony of Justin Martyr to the general simplicity of Christian life and worship in that period. Neither Clement nor Polycarp touch upon many things which Justin has narrated in detail. We shall adduce these things in order to show, how, up to the latest period of the first post-apostolic age, great simplicity prevailed in all the service of the church of Christ. If, in addition to this, we find nothing opposed to the preceding testimony given by Clement and Polycarp, in any of Justin Martyr's writings, as is the case, we

* Apolog. I., quoted, with some omissions, by Neander, Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., ii. 336.

† See his Dialogue with Trypho, and his two Apologies for the Christians. Cave, in his Life of Justin Martyr, has gathered together these particulars; also Neander, in the second volume of his Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c.

shall feel justified in stating that the age of independency reached up to, if not, in many essential things, beyond this period.

The principal writings of Justin* are *two apologies* for Christianity, the first designed for Antoninus Pius, and the second probably for Marcus Aurelius. In both of these, as might be expected, there are references to the faith, and manners, and mode of worship of the Christians of that day. The first apology,† or the one addressed to Antoninus, contains the fullest reference to these things. The following passage, embracing many points of detail, will throw clear light upon the transactions of the churches of the first age. "We bring the convert to those that are called brethren,‡ where they are collected to offer common prayers, both for themselves and for the illuminated person, and for all others, everywhere, earnestly. . . . Prayers being ended, we salute each other with a kiss. Then there is presented to the president of the brethren,§ bread, and a cup of water and wine,|| and he having taken

* The Epistle to Diognetus, once assigned to Justin, and often printed amongst his works, is now generally referred to a much earlier period. It need hardly be said that there is nothing in it opposed to the views developed in our pages; but every thing in their favour. The best description of this letter is given in Bennett's Theology of the early Christian Church, pp. 6—10. See also Hagenbach's Hist. of Doctrines, Buch. vol. i. pp. 55—56.

† In some editions this is called the second, *e. g.* Stevens.

‡ τοὶς λεγομένοις ἀδελφοὶς.

§ τῳ προεστῶτι τῶν αδελφῶν. Some have said, This is evidently the bishop. From Justin's using the word *president,* however, and that invariably, it is evident, we think, that the word *bishop* had not yet come into ecclesiastical use, to distinguish the president amongst the Presbyters from the rest of the Presbyters.

|| Καὶ κράματος.

them, offers up praise and glory to the Father of all, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and makes much thanksgiving, for having been counted by him worthy of these things. He having finished the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present assent, saying, *Amen;* which in the Hebrew signifies *so be it.* But the president having given thanks, and all the people having responded, those who among us who are called deacons* give to every one of those present to partake of the bread and wine and water, for which thanks had been given, and (afterwards) carry them to those who are not present. This food is called among us Eucharist, of which no one may partake but he who believes in the things taught by us to be true, and has been washed with that washing which is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and is living so as Christ commanded us.† For we take these things, not as common bread and common drink, but in the same manner as by the Word of God, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was made flesh, and had flesh and blood for our salvation; so also we are taught that that food which is blessed by the word of prayer, that is from him,‡ and from which our own blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Incarnate Jesus. For the apostles in the memorials made by them, which are called the gospels,§ have so delivered that Jesus commanded them, when he took the bread, and blessed it and said: This do in remembrance of me; this is my body; and when he took the cup in like manner and blessed it and

* Oἵ καλούμενοι παρ' ἡμῖν διάκονοι.

† παρεδωκεν·

‡ δι' ἐυχῆς λόγου τοῦ παῤ αὐτου.

§ ἐν τοῖς γενομένοις ὑπ' ἀυτῶν ἀπομνημονεύμασιν, ἃ καλεται εὐαγγέλια.

said, This is my blood, and gave it to them alone. . . . But we afterwards always remind one another of these things, and we that have sufficient relieve those that are in want, and we are with one another always. And with all those things which we bring, [*i. e.* offerings], we bless the Maker of all things through his Son Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday, there is a gathering into the same place * of all that live in city or country, and the memorials of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read as long as may suffice. Then when the reader† has ceased, the president in a speech gives an admonition or exhortation to the imitation of these excellent things. Then we all rise together, and send forth prayers. And as we have said before, when our prayer has ceased, bread and wine and water are brought. And the president sends forth prayers and thanksgiving such as he is able,‡ and the people praise, saying, Amen. And the distribution, and the participation of the Eucharist is made to each, and is sent to those who are absent by the deacons. Then those who are wealthy and willing, contribute each of his own accord what he is willing; and the collection is placed with the president, and he relieves the orphans and widows, and the sick, or such as are in want from any other cause, and those who are in bonds, and those who are strangers amongst the people, and in a word care is taken of all who are in need."

If this be a fair specimen, as in all probability it is, of the general practice of the churches, in religious worship, we conclude that very little innovation had as yet been made upon the simplicity of apostolic institu-

* ἐπὶ το αὐτο. † ἀναγινωσκοντος. ‡ ὁση δυναμις ἀυτῳ.

tions. There may be exceptionable expressions here and there in the statements of Justin, for which some allowance must be made, when we consider that the age of logomachy and definition had not yet arrived; and there may be an addition to the original institution of the Lord's Supper which could not but be harmful in the long run; but still the whole account shows that this was the day of a comparatively primitive worship. Nothing is said in this, or in any other passage from the same author, which implies that the minister or president held his official position over more than one congregation.* The deacons retain their original character as servers of tables. Although a reader, distinct from the president or minister, appears to have had place at that time, it is probable that it was a mere matter of convenience for the relief of the minister, and not an ecclesiastical office, any more than that of a clerk for the giving out of hymns in the present day. The minister preached and prayed extempore, since he is said to do both "according to his ability;" an expression which cannot possibly refer to strength of lungs in the reading of a written sermon, or a set form of liturgic service.† Those who composed the church and partook of the Lord's Supper, are emphatically declared to be en-

* Though the persons who met on Sunday for worship are spoken of as dwelling in town and country, yet they meet in *one* place. To speak of the cure of a minister whose people can all meet in one place as a diocese, is not according to the modern conventional meaning of the term diocese. See Clarkson's "No Evidence for Diocesan Churches," and "Diocesan Churches not yet Discovered in the Primitive Times."

† Reeves, in his Translation of the Apologies, labors hard to shew that the expression which we have translated "according to his ability," means "with all the fervency he is able." Surely

lightened and converted men—men making a credible profession of religion. The contributions of the people were all voluntary. The widows and orphans, the sick, the imprisoned, and the stranger, were all provided for, according to their need, out of the church's fund; and the minister or president was a guardian and father to all.

Probably there might be at this period an excessive reverence for the minister, in consequence of too much being devolved upon him. We cannot, however, discover from Justin any symptoms of the rise of a prelatical order at present, any more than we can of synodical authority. The general view which is given of the church's constitution in this and all other portions of Justin's writings, is, that of a congregational fellowship, distinct in itself in every locality, governed by its own laws, and presided over by its own minister or ministers.

So far then we are authorized to regard the present age as the age of Independency. With some trifling exceptions here and there, such as might arise from individual caprice or ambition, as in the days of the apostles themselves, the churches up to this period were independent. Individual Christians were subject in all matters affecting conscience, and religious faith and practice, to Divine authority alone. When Christians were united with one another in fellowship, the identity of their faith and character was the basis of union. Each fellowship or society was such as could meet in one place, was self-governed, and independent of

Justin would have used some more suitable expression, if he had intended to convey this meaning. See on this subject Clarkson's Discourse concerning Liturgies, Select Works, p. 294, &c. Also King's Primitive Church, part ii. p. 33.

all foreign interference. The intercommunion of churches was considerable, and of course proceeded on the understanding of a community of faith and practice in all the essentials of Christianity. Although the advice of eminent men, such as Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp might be sought for by many churches in cases of difficulty, and although one church might ask counsel from another in certain emergencies, yet no power had as yet arisen by which any church, or any number of churches, could be authoritatively controlled. Although, therefore, to use the words of Neander, "We must be cautious that we do not expect to find, in these first days of the church, any exclusively *golden age* of purity; nor in the visible church any community entirely glorious, and without spot or wrinkle,"* yet there was more of simplicity than has characterized the church of Christ since, and that simplicity arose from the general prevalence of apostolic, that is, divinely appointed institutions.

We might extend these remarks—in reference to many particulars at least—to periods beyond this. In the writings of Irenæus and Tertullian, whose names come before us on the page of history a little after this time, and indeed in most of the records of the first three centuries, we find abundant evidence of the resistance which was offered to change and innovation in respect to the primitive state of things. But if a line must be drawn, after a general manner, between the age of purely apostolic institutions and the succeeding ages of innovation, subversion, and ultimate total corruption, we think it must be drawn here. Up to this time the churches of Christ, so far

* Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., Rose, i. 277, 278.

as their organization is concerned, preserve all the main features by which they were characterized in the age of the apostles; but from this period those features gradually become changed, until at last the fair aspect, harmonious proportions, and free movements of Christian liberty give place to the harlot visage, hierarchical deformities, and mercenary operations of spiritual despotism.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF INNOVATION.

[A. D. 167—324].

In fixing the limits of the first post-apostolic age as we have done in the last chapter, we have been guided by the records which have descended to our times from that period. It has been thought singular that these contemporaneous memorials should be so few and scanty, and many have deplored the circumstance as a loss to all succeeding times. Probably there is some cause for regret; especially if any of the documents of that age have been destroyed, as is by no means improbable, in order that they might not condemn the practices of professing Christians in after periods. We know that many of the early documents of antiquity have been interpolated to such an extent as to be almost worthless; and we can therefore easily believe that others were destroyed for the same reasons. The pious frauds committed by professing Christians in the third and fourth centuries, which have occasioned so much trouble to the critics of modern times, compel us to form a poor opinion of the leading men of those periods, by whom alone they could be committed, and serve to show that there

must have been a wide-spread prevalence of error and insincerity. The days of innocence and artless piety must have given place to those of guile and hypocrisy before such things could have become general. The records of primitive faith and practice are put out of the way, because they raise the blush upon the cheek of imposture and ecclesiastical assumption! A church, which had forgotten its first love and forsaken its early practices, was afflicted with the tremblings of a spiritual palsy by the ghosts of departed saints; and so they must be laid!

At the same time, we can hardly conceive it likely that the documents of the first century were either so numerous, or, in themselves, so important as has sometimes been supposed. For the same reason that we assigned for the continuance of apostolic institutions for some time after the apostles had died—namely, the operation of the law of moral momentum—it may be concluded, without doubt, that for some time at least after the apostolic age had closed, there would be little inclination any where in the Christian communities to read any other documents than those of inspired men. The habit which had been acquired, not without some difficulty, of looking to the apostles alone as authorities in religious matters, would not merely be continued in the immediately succeeding periods; but would probably be for some time stronger than in the apostolic age itself, when that habit was only being formed. For the phenomenon which has so often been observed in the natural world, is illustrative of a similar one in the moral world. The warmest period of the day is not that in which the sun has just arrived at the meridian; but a little after. In like manner, the operation of moral causes is the

most powerful, not when some would expect them to be so, in the moment of direct action; but a little afterwards, when time has been given for the accumulation of the causal influences. Undoubtedly, it took some time for the apostles to establish their authority over the churches of Christ; and we find that now and then considerable resistance was offered to it, notwithstanding the convincing proofs afforded of their divine delegation. Towards the close of the apostolic era, however, we are warranted in supposing that their prerogative would more seldom be called in question; and that immediately and for some time after it had closed, the submission which had hitherto been rendered would grow into a reverence perhaps not altogether unmingled with superstition, increased amongst the churches by the consciousness of their great loss. Hence the value that was attached to apostolic writings in the first post-apostolic age. Hence, also, the probability that comparatively little value would be attached to the compositions of uninspired men. On the whole, then, we think it likely that, in the first age, men were more anxious to attach themselves to apostolic institutions, and to derive instruction from apostolic writings or traditions, than to fabricate or follow merely human opinions in matters of religion. It was reserved for other periods, when the impression produced by the sanctity and personal authority of the living apostles had vanished from the hearts of Christians, to deluge the church with all the varieties and contradictions of merely human opinion.

On these grounds, then, we think it providential that any genuine documents should have descended

to us from the earliest periods. So far from complaining of their paucity, we are thankful for what we possess; especially when we consider what narrow escapes they must have had in passing safely through periods of fraudful suppression and interpolation. When we know that sacrilegious hands have been laid on the vessels and treasures of the ancient sanctuary, we are grateful if any have escaped the furtive rapacity of the depredators, and remain to us as real specimens of the riches of a by-gone age.

The period upon which we now enter, besides being more extended, is characterized by a gradual change in respect to the number of contemporaneous writings. Our difficulty, now, is not so much in obtaining evidence, as in attending to it with patience. Voluminous authors, historians, philosophers, commentators, sermonizers, canonists, distract the attention with their variegated productions, and amidst the Babel noise, it is not easy to push our inquiries to a successful issue. To mention the names of all the authors whose works have descended to us from this period would be an useless task. Neither shall we mention any of those events which do not illustrate our particular subject of inquiry. Availing ourselves of the investigations of modern ecclesiastical historians, who have made the study of this subject the business of their lives, we propose to indicate the gradual changes which came over the simple institutions of the apostolic and primitive times. It is only here and there, where conflicting modern interpretations have rendered this mode of procedure needful, that we have consulted the original authorities themselves. Whatever may be advanced, however, in the

shape of fact, will be such as all modern authorities in this department of inquiry are agreed in receiving as such.

Before we proceed to an account of the various changes which took place in relation to the constitution of the Christian church during this period, it seems needful to state that, probably, the germs of many of them were secretly developing themselves during the last age. From the statements of the apostle Paul, we infer that even in the earliest period of the church's history, there were those elementary principles and tendencies at work, which only required time and favourable opportunities for their visible development. His language in the second chapter of the second Epistle to the Thessalonians, affords a key to the interpretation of the general course of post-apostolic history, and should never be forgotten by the historian of the church:—"We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what witholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

And then shall that wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, in them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Whatever historical interpretation be put upon these prophetic words, it is plain that the keen eye of the apostle penetrated beneath the surface of things, as they existed in his day, and detected the secret operation of principles which should afterwards germinate and expand into all the developments and corruptions of an antichristian system—an enthronement of human authority in the very place of Christ! We shall not read the history of the church aright if we do not trace in it the gradual fulfilment of this apostolic prophecy—if we do not detect the working of Satan, the power, the signs, the lying wonders, the deceivableness of unrighteousness, the faith in strong delusions and lies, which characterized the professed church of Christ in succeeding times. The commencement, however,—the underground process, invisible to ordinary eyes—was in the apostolic age itself. Something "let," or prevented, for a season, the outward manifestation; but the "working" was then in existence.

The apostle Peter, in the second chapter of his second general epistle—an epistle addressed to all Christians, and not to any particular church—gives a further

clue to the unravelling of this mystery. "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you." Here, the agency by which great changes were to be introduced is specifically mentioned. The *teachers* would be in fault. Through the instrumentality of the church's instructors, who ought to build it up on the only foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone; should such a system of innovation be introduced as should convert the spiritual stones of the living temple into mere articles of merchandize. Christian men should no longer be regarded as Christ's freemen; but as the very slaves of those who ought to be their guardians, and the conservators of their liberties! What history of the church, however comparatively unfaithful, shall we peruse, in which the truth of these Divine predictions is not verified. It is not for us, however, to detect the latent working of those tendencies, by which ultimately such results were realized. We cannot watch those underground processes by which the seeds of things are fostered into growth; we must wait until the cracked and loosened surface of the soil invites our attention to the visible effect of operations that had been hitherto concealed.

In this second post-apostolic age, our attention is thus solicited. The soil in which the church had at first been planted a goodly plant, begins to be broken here and there, and plants of an unnatural growth,

bearing deadly fruit, grow up. It is after the working of Satan, with all deceivableness; yet palpably such as to lead the observer to say,—"An enemy hath done this!" In the course of time, these exotics of the church multiply, fill the air with their poisonous vapours, choke the growth of the plant of God's right hand planting, and ultimately occupy nearly the whole space of the church's operations. Using the three principles of Independency as our tests, let us investigate the nature, extent, and causes of this marvellous series of changes.

It would be incorrect to say, in reference to the innovations which took place, that they subverted the three principles of Independency in the order in which we have exhibited them. Sometimes the change commenced with one and sometimes with another of them; but it would be difficult to determine what change or series of changes had the greatest power in the production of the general result. At the same time, we are inclined to think that there were causes at work which altered the general feeling in respect to the *individual independency* of Christians before any very great change took place in reference to other points. At first, all Christians were taught to regard themselves as Christ's servants alone, dependant upon him, responsible to him; and so long as this state of things continued, all would feel themselves interested in the liberties of all, and nothing would be admitted in the opinions of men or the organization of the churches, subversive of so generally recognized a principle. As the churches, however, increased in number, and heretical opinions prevailed, and men of influence began to form parties, and a sense of immediate responsibility to Christ diminished, the practical

result would be less regard to the rights of conscience and the liberty of private judgment. Although, therefore, in the first post-apostolic age there was no theoretic abrogation of this principle, there are indications of a greater deference to human interpretations of the Divine word, and human sanction for certain lines of conduct, than we think are compatible with a full though unassuming maintenance of the privilege and duty of immediate subjection on the part of every Christian man to Christ alone. A scrupulous anxiety to follow Him, would, so long as it prevailed, preserve not only individual but congregational independence; but let this disappear, and it can hardly be predicted how far other principles may be permitted to come in to corrupt and to destroy.

There was nothing positively wrong in the conduct of the church at Corinth, when it sent delegates to the church at Rome asking for the advice which was given in Clement's epistle. There may have been, however, and there probably was, too much of deference to the judgment of the church at Rome on the one hand, even as probably there had been too much of haste in deposing their own bishops on the other; and if Clement had sent the Corinthians, as has been judiciously observed,* back to the re-perusal of those inspired writings which had been written to them at a former period in a season of strife, instead of giving any special and separate advice of his own, it is not unlikely that greater benefit would ultimately have been conferred upon the Corinthian Christians. But, after all, it is difficult to decide from the documents which have reached us, how far there may have been a falling away from the right spirit in that early age.

* Bennett's Theology of the Early Christian Church, p. 16.

As we advance, however, to the period of which we are now treating, we see the growth, both rapid and decisive, of certain opinions which never could have received countenance so long as men retained a fast hold upon their individual independence, for the sake of a more complete subjection to Christ. We refer to those opinions which relate to the idea of a VISIBLE CATHOLIC CHURCH. This idea sprang up in the earliest period of the age, and quickly developed itself.* It is thus characterized in the words of Neander, who has given perhaps a more philosophic account of its origin and influence than any other writer.

"This great whole of the catholic church, which in all its scattered parts was still firmly united, was, in its origin, its development, and its constitution, utterly different from all mere human institutions. The consciousness of being a member of such a body, victorious over every opposition of earthly power, and destined for eternity, must have been more lively and more powerful in those who, having, in their earlier years of heathenism, known no bonds of union, except those of a political and secular nature, had been blessed with no feelings of such a moral and spiritual bond of unity, which bound mankind together, as all members of the same heavenly community. Therefore must this feeling have been stronger and more lofty, when all the powers from without sought in vain to tear this bond in sunder. Justly might this unity, which revealed itself outwardly,—this close bond of outward connexion, be of great importance to Chris-

* The term *Catholic Church* first appears in one of the Ignatian Epistles (ad Smyrn. c. 8); but is probably the interpolation of a later period. It next appears in the Epistle of the Church at Smyrna respecting the martyrdom of Polycarp, cap. 8, 16, 19.

tians, as the symbol of that higher life, by the participation in which all Christians were to be united together, as the revelation of the unity of the kingdom of God. In the outward communion of the church, they perceived the blessing of the inward communion of the invisible kingdom of God; and they struggled for the maintenance of that unity, partly against the idealistic sects, who threatened to tear in sunder the inward bond of religious communion, the bond of faith, and partly against those who, blinded by self-will or passion, founded divisions on mere outward causes, while they agreed in faith with the rest. But this polemical spirit, though it proceeded from a lively Christian feeling, which deeply felt the blessing of religious communion—this inward life in the church, though it proceeded from a truly Christian source of warmth, was apt to seduce men into the opposite extreme of over-prizing the external unity of the church, and of over-prizing the existing forms in the church, with which that unity was combined. As men in the churchly life, as long as it proceeded from inward feelings of Christianity, and was still animated and penetrated by them, and ere it had been benumbed in dead forms, became conscious of this intimate connexion between the visible and the invisible church; as men, in the communion of this visible church, felt deeply the blessing of communion with the Redeemer and with the whole body of saints, which receives its Divine living powers from Him, its head, and spreads them among its individual members; it was more likely, on that account, in this polemical contrast, that they should be led away, so as too closely to interweave in idea also, that which had been thus joined and melted together in the

experience and the feelings of every one, and also to lay it down in theory, that it was bound together in a necessary and indissoluble union. And thus then arose the confusion between the visible and the invisible church, the confusion of the inward union of the invisible church, an union of spirit which consists in faith and love, with the outward unity of the visible church, which is dependent on certain and outward forms. As these forms of the church were the instruments through which, by means of the feelings engendered in these forms, men had received the blessing of communion with the invisible head of the church; they were more easily induced too closely to join together form and essentials, the vessel of clay and the inestimable heavenly treasure, to attribute too much to the earthly form, and to consider a subjective union, in the life and hearts of individuals, as an objective and necessary one. This principle would form itself in the following mode; the external church, which exists in this visible outward form, is, with all these outward forms, a Divine institution; we cannot make a distinction here between human and Divine; under this form has the church received Divine things from Christ, and only under this form does she communicate them, and he alone can receive them who *receives* them from her in this *outward* form. The invisible church, the kingdom of God, is represented in this outward form; and inward communion with that invisible church, as well as the participation of all her advantages, is necessarily connected with outward communion with this external church, which exists in these forms.

"The confusion between the views of the Old and those of the New Testament on the theocracy, which

we remarked above in the notions of the priesthood, also made its appearance again here. As in the Old Testament the establishment and the extension of the theocracy was necessarily connected with many outward earthly things, which were only shadows and figures of that which was to appear in all its reality in Christianity, men would have it, that the theocracy of the New Testament must also depend for its establishment and propagation on similar visible and earthly things; as the theocracy of the Old Testament was necessarily joined with a definite outward and visible priesthood, so also they would have it, that that of the New Testament was also necessarily joined with an outward priesthood of the same sort, Divinely founded also. Men forgot that the difference between the church of Christ and the theocracy in the Old Testament did not merely consist in the difference of outward signs and forms, but that there was a far more important distinction in the relation of the outward to the inward, of earthly things to heavenly and spiritual things. This is a most essential error, and has been the source of many other errors, with consequences of practical importance, which afterwards gradually unfolded themselves.

"We find this confusion between the conception of the invisible and the visible church, and the doctrine which was deduced from it, of an *outward* church, which could alone confer salvation, and hence of a necessary *outward* unity of that church, first most decidedly pronounced, and carried through most logically, in the remarkable book on the unity of the church, (*de unitate ecclesiæ,*) which Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, wrote after the middle of the third century, in the midst of the divisions with

which he had to contend. This book contains a striking instance of falsehood and truth. If we understand what Cyprian says, as referring to the communion of a higher life, to the necessary inward union with the one divine source of life in Christ, from which alone true life can flow forth on all the members of the communion of saints, and to the necessary communuion between this body and their head, through the direction of the heart in faith and feelings:—if we introduce into the conclusions of Cyprian, the difference between a visible and an invisible church, between the inward unity of the kingdom of God, and the outward unity of a visible church; between an inward communion with the church of the redeemed, and an outward connexion with a certain outward form, under which that church, whose foundations are in the inward heart, in faith and in love, appears:—then, indeed, we shall find much truth in what he says against a proud and self-seeking spirit, which struggles to get free from its connexion with the one kingdom of God, whose head, foundation, and centre point, is Christ, and is anxious to set itself up as something independent. 'Only endeavour,' says Cyprian, 'to free the sun-beam from the sun! The unity of sight will not be broken. Break the branch from the tree, and it can bear no fruit! Dissever the stream from the source, and it dries up! Thus also the church, beamed upon by the light of the Lord, extends its beams over all the world; but it is still only one light, which spreads itself into all directions; from the bosom of that church are we all born, nourished by her milk, and animated by her spirit. That which is torn asunder from the original stem, can neither breathe nor live

separate and independent.' This is certainly all just enough, if we understand by that original whole, in connexion with which alone each individual can thrive, the invisible church of the redeemed under their invisible head, Christ; if we attribute that unity only to spiritual communion, and that separation only to a separation in heart; but the fundamental error, by which everything which is really true in itself received a false application, was the transference of these notions from all this to an external church, appearing under distinct outward forms, and necessarily dependent on them; a church which had maintained itself from the time of the apostles, under its existing constitution, by means of the bishops, its pillars, the successors of the apostles, and the heirs of the power which had been delivered to the apostles. Christ, according to this view, had imparted to the apostles, and the apostles, by ordination, had imparted to the bishops, the power of the Holy Ghost; by means of this external transmission, the power of the Holy Ghost, by which alone all religious acts can receive their true efficiency, was shed abroad and preserved to all times through the succession of bishops. Thus by this living and constantly progressing organization of the church, was maintained that Divine life, which is imparted by this intermediate step from the head to all the members that remain in union with this organization; and he who cuts himself off from outward communion with this outward organization, shuts himself out from that Divine life and from the way to salvation. No one can, as an isolated individual, by faith in the Redeemer, receive a share in the Divine life, which proceeds from Him; no one can, by this faith alone, secure for himself all the advan-

tages of the kingdom of God; but to all this man can alone attain by the instrumentality of the catholic church, which has been preserved by the succession of bishops."*

As, on the one hand, this idea of the visible Catholic church could never have been promulgated to any extent, where men had not in some measure loosed their hold on primitive truths relating to man's individual responsibility, and therefore independence;† so, on the other, as it grew more definite, and passed from theory into practice, it sapped the foundations of religious liberty, both in the individual and in the congregation, and led to results in many ways most disastrous to the churches' real prosperity. If any one word has had greater magic power than another to blind and deceive men, with "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness," it is this word as applied to the visible church of Christ.‡ Christ's promise to his disciples was, that where *two or three* were met together in his name, there he would be in the midst of them.§ This dogma practically annuls that promise by saying, "If you do not meet together *under the shade of the one universal church,* the promise will not be realized." The apostolic injunction is, "Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God." || This dogma

* Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, etc., vol. i. p. 214-218.

† Rom. xiv. 12. "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God;" xiv. 3. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" xiv. 4. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," etc., etc.

‡ One reason why we have used the term *aggregate* in our enunciation of the third principle of Independency, is that it *expresses* the idea of *parts* as well as of a whole; whereas the term *catholic* does not, and is therefore all the more potent for evil.

§ Matt. xviii. 20. || Rom. xiv. 22.

practically cancels that injunction and says, "Hast thou faith? show it to the priest, that he may say whether it agree with the faith of the holy catholic church." The scriptural test of genuine discipleship to Christ is, "By their fruits shall ye know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?"* This dogma introduces an altogether different test, by which this—the only practicable test where men cannot read the heart—is virtually set aside; for it says, "By their union with the visible catholic church shall ye know them. Can there be salvation out of its pale? Can there be the ministration of truth except where there is the true succession? Can there be faith except where the church approves?"

Such, in effect, was the operation of this dogma, and such it continues to be, wherever it lays hold upon the imaginations of men. Its tendency is to condense the Bible into a creed, to elevate the minister into the master, to drive men from Scripture and from "mother faith," † to the sacraments and to "mother church," for salvation; to draw the eye from Him who is in heaven, the prophet, priest, and king of our profession, that it may look round upon the whole horizon of a visible ecclesiastical unity, in order to ascertain the will of God; and as this wide range of vision cannot be taken, its ultimate tendency is to thrust Christ from his mediatorial throne, and place the pope, as universal vicar of Christ, there instead—the representative of a visible catholic church!

Undoubtedly there was some appearance of truth in this dogma, as Neander has shown: there was

* Matt. vii. 16—20. † See back, page 153.

"the working of Satan" in it, with "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness." Of course the apostles were the first instructors of the church, the first planters of churches, the first founders of the church's institutions, the first appointers of office and order, the first administerers of Christian sacraments. But did not many who received apostolic instruction make "shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience"? Did not many of the churches planted by the apostles "forsake their first love"? Were not their institutions abused even in their day? Did not a Demas and a Diotrephes prove that even apostolic ordination and appointment were nothing where the Christian spirit was wanting? Was not a Simon Magus sufficient proof that baptism could not regenerate, and the corruption of the Corinthian church sufficient proof that the Lord's Supper was not necessarily a means of grace, much less a viaticum to heaven? And if these things be true, must it not be inferred that something more than a linking on by some imaginary succession of office to apostolic times is needful to the church's existence, much more to the church's unity?

In a word, this notion of the visible catholicity of the church of Christ was entirely opposed to the Redeemer's saying respecting his kingdom—that it would not come "with observation," and that its advancement could not be pointed to with the finger as a visible thing, of which men might say "Lo here!" or "Lo there!" The only visible union which could exist between Christ's people was that arising from a charitable reception of one another on the ground of a credible profession of faith in Him—a reception which was by no means to swell out into a judgment

respecting conscience and the heart. Such a spirit of judging had been forbidden both by Christ and his apostles. While the eye of Omniscience alone could penetrate to the secrets of the breast, all who professed attachment to the Redeemer were to receive one another in love, as those for whom Christ had died.

Unscriptural, however, and pernicious as this dogma was, it grew during this age with great rapidity, and became a kind of nucleus of corruption. Some good men, and it may be with sincerity of a certain kind, lent their aid in giving it practical confirmation. Strong delusions reigned where before a simple faith and practice had prevailed. No power arose sufficient to arrest the onward and downward progress of the church in respect to all that was spiritual and vital in religion. Here and there a feeble voice was raised against the innovations of the day; but in vain. The spirit of the world took possession of the church, and developed itself in all the forms of ambition, ostentation, selfishness, sensuality, rapacity and persecution; until, at last, the kingdom which was not to be of this world, became the most worldly and powerful of all the kingdoms that ever had being on earth.

We must not overlook the fact, however, that the dogma, on which we have dwelt so much at length, *grew*, and thereby declared its human origin. It had no place in the apostolic age, nor in that immediately succeeding, except in a very imperfect degree.* As, however, heresy, real or supposed, arose and became formidable in the opinion of the church's instructors, it came into use as a con-

* Gieseler's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 92.

venient supplement or substitute for argumentative refutation. Irenæus and Tertullian* are the first to develop it with this declared purpose,† and found it probably more successful than they could have expected. The ministers of the churches gladly availed themselves of a method of silencing heretics, so simple, so easily practicable, and so much calculated to increase their own official importance; and, at length, Cyprian,‡ boldly announcing and unfolding it in a systematic treatise, led the way to its practical realization in all the movements of the catholic church. Then, to use the words of Gieseler, "the idea strove to give itself an outward expression in the unity of everything belonging to the church. While religious faith was made interchangeable with the intelligent expression of it in doctrine, men began also to consider the unity of the latter as necessary to the unity of the church, and to limit freedom of inquiry more and more.'

It is scarcely necessary to say, that the innovation, or rather class of innovations, introduced by, or co-ordinate with, the development of this unscriptural view of the church of Christ, was subversive of all the principles of religious Independency. We have admitted that probably in the first age, and more espe-

* Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, died somewhere about the close of the second century. His work against heresies was probably written between A.D. 177 and A.D. 192. Tertullian is thought to have died at Carthage, A.D. 245, out of the pale of the catholic church—a heretic, although his principal writings were against heresy!

† Irenæus, iii. 3. Tertullian de præscr. hær. c. xxi; quoted by Gieseler, i. 159.

‡ Cyprian, bishop at Carthage, was beheaded A.D. 258. His work *de unitate ecclesiæ* is the treatise referred to in the text.

cially towards its close, there was not that regard to individual responsibility, and to individual liberty of conscience, as essential to its practical operation, which the apostles had inculcated on the primitive Christians. The falling away at that time, however, was in feeling rather than in action, and took the form of an unconscious spiritual declension, which could only be recognized in its results. But when this view of the church's visible unity prevailed, the very theory of individual independence was subverted, and men gave up their consciences and their souls to the guardianship of their fellow-men.

We are not surprised, then, to find that at the same period,—whether as cause or effect, it is difficult to decide,—there should be a change in respect to the principle of *congregational Independency*, both internal and external. This change we now proceed to notice.

The first thing demanding attention respects the change which took place in the name by which the spiritual officers of the church were distinguished. We have seen how in the early period of the church's history there were two words in use, the origin of which may easily be accounted for.* We have also seen how for a long period these names were used interchangeably as two names of one and the same class of persons. We have now to show how a gradual change in the ecclesiastical use of these words crept into the church, which led to results of much greater consequence than might have been anticipated.

We have already noticed how Clement of Rome and Polycarp make mention of *bishops* and *presbyters*—

* See back, pp. 50—53.

namely, in such a manner as to convince the reader of their epistles that in their age there was no more distinction between the two names than is usually discovered in synonymous words,—such as magistrate and ruler, house and habitation, etc. Bishops were presbyters, and presbyters were bishops. Whichever term was used, the same official party was understood to be referred to. In the course of time, however, a distinction was made, which divided the spiritual officers into two classes. This distinction arose very gradually, and not perhaps with much uniformity of practice for some time, from the requirements of the congregational churches in their assembled and deliberative character. It was expedient at their church meetings that one should preside. At first, probably, this presidency might be determined at the time of meeting, or might come round to all the spiritual officers in turn, or might be given to him who was the most reverend for age, or the most fitted for the position by experience. Wherever the post of presidency became permanent, from either of the last-mentioned causes, the party occupying it would of necessity be designated by some appropriate term. In Justin Martyr's time, if we may judge from his writings, the term *president* (προεστως) was used; but, soon after, the term *bishop* took its place, most likely because it seemed more fitting to be applied to the individual who *seemed* to take the "oversight" in a more special manner than the other spiritual officers. We can imagine how parties wishing to name the president amongst the bishops or presbyters, would come to speak of him as "*the* bishop," by way of eminence; and how gradually this word would cease to be used in reference to the rest, more particularly

in those churches where the presidential office became permanent and influential. Here, then, is the first development of the distinction between bishops and presbyters—the first budding of hierarchical ranks and orders in the church. Probably the Christians of that day little imagined how by this trifling change in the nomenclature of the church's officers, they were taking the first step towards the subjugation of their own religious rights and liberties. The little streamlet which may be divided into two by the human foot, or even by a pebble, near the fountain head, in its after progress may present the aspect of two rivers wide asunder from one another, and increasing the distance between them the farther their onward flow.

It must not be supposed, however, that at first this distinction in the use of the words bishop and presbyter followed any very strict law of usage. Time was necessary to confirm it, and something even more than time. So long as the president-bishop was regarded as a president only, it would often be needful to say "*the* bishop," with an emphasis on the word, in order to distinguish him from the rest of the bishops of the church. Therefore we expect to find in the writings of the period now referred to an arbitrariness in the use of the two names of office. We expect to find *the* bishop sometimes spoken of as distinct from the other bishops or presbyters, and sometimes as one of and one with them.

This is actually the case, as Neander says, up to "even the end of the second century."* Irenæus, for example, who wrote at the close of the second century,

* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., vol. i. p. 194. See also Gieseler's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 109.

or between A.D. 177 and A.D. 192, sometimes uses the names bishop and presbyter as synonymous, and sometimes distinguishes between them. In one part he speaks of the episcopal succession as belonging to the presbyters, evidently implying that presbyters were bishops;* while in another part of his writings he speaks of Paul's calling the elders of Ephesus together at Miletus, in such a manner as to imply that he considered the elders divided into two classes, namely, bishops *and* presbyters.† From such evidence as this we learn how arbitrary the use of the two names was at that time. We see the spirit of innovation at work, and trace the progress of its operations. This relation of the two words, and of the ideas conveyed by them, continued for some time after the period in which Irenæus wrote, even up to the time of Tertullian, who died A.D. 245. We then see a more marked difference and distance of meaning between the names and offices; although even Tertullian at times speaks of both under the one general designation of seniors.‡ But before we mention the precise nature of this further change, we must advert to some other innovations which led to it, and in many ways affected the general constitution of the church.

We refer to the rise and growth of SYNODICAL AS-

* Irenæus adv. Hæreses, iii. 2, iv. 26, v. 20, successiones presbyterorum, &c.

† Ibid. iii. 14. In Mileto enim convocatis Episcopis et Presbyteris, qui erant ab Epheso, et a reliquis proximis civitatibus, &c.: "For the bishops and presbyters being called together at Miletus, who were from Ephesus and from the other neighbouring cities,' '&c. It is scarcely needful to point out the discrepancy between Irenæus and what we find in Acts xx.

‡ Apologet. ch. xxxix.

SEMBLIES. During the apostolic age, as we have seen,* such convocations were unknown. There are no traces of them in the greater portion of the first post-apostolic age; and if, as is probable, they began to develop themselves towards the close of that age, it was in a very simple manner. The church of Christ in that period did not think of delegating to others the power of settling controversy. Evidence and argument were considered to be independent of numbers. A people who had so long been in a minority against the world had not yet quite forgotten that majorities might possibly be in the wrong. The words of Christ, "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," still sounded in the ear of the Christian world. The injunctions of the apostle, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good;" "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" were still held in remembrance and practically obeyed. At the same time it should be observed, that the very piety of the early Christians prepared them to be the dupes of designing men; and the catholicity of spirit which they cherished, and which naturally sought to exhibit itself in some outward and visible form,† opened a way for change and innovation whenever the favourable occasion might present itself. The consequences which attend the progress of change were not then known and under-

* See back, book i. chap. v.

† Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c., vol. i. p. 207.

stood as they now are. The bitter experience through which the church has passed since that period was never imagined to be a possible thing under any circumstances, much less as the result of early departure from primitive and apostolic institutions. As the "mother of all living" little knew how her one rash act would bring death and woe upon all her posterity, so the Christians of this period little imagined how by their too easy concession to the spirit of innovation most of the evils which have afflicted the church would be ultimately introduced. They yielded, however, to the voice of the seducing spirit. Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, and even the elect were deceived by the subtlety of his approaches under the guise of friendship and love. The insinuating admonitions to the outward manifestation of a Christian unity which assailed their ears, gradually acquired all the power of a spell over their minds. The waves which stole in upon the shore were welcomed, because of the gentleness of their first advances. No defences were reared, no breakwater was erected, because no danger was apprehended. But it was discovered—alas! only when too late—that place had been given to an element of storms and tempests, desolation and death.

In reference to the gradual progress of the change now under consideration, all our ecclesiastical historians are agreed.* In order that our views on this important subject may be fully confirmed in the mind of the reader, we proceed to adduce the testimony of

* See the Cent. Magdeb. Basil, 1629, p. 402, for a striking reference to an early canon (No. 35), which limits the authority of the bishop; so that he may do nothing contrary to the conscientious conviction of all in the several parishes of a province. *Sed*

some of those who are most worthy of confidence as impartial narrators of fact.

"During a greater part of the second century," says Mosheim, "the Christian churches were independent of each other; nor were they joined together by association, confederacy, or any other bonds but those of charity. Each Christian assembly was a little state, governed by its own laws, which were either enacted, or, at least, approved by the society. But, in process of time, all the Christian churches of a province were formed into one large ecclesiastical body, which, like confederate states, assembled at certain times in order to deliberate about the common interests of the whole. This institution had its origin among the Greeks, with whom nothing was more common than this confederacy of independent states, and the regular assemblies which met in consequence thereof at fixed times, and were composed of the deputies of each respective state. But these ecclesiastical associations were not long confined to the Greeks: their great utility was no sooner perceived than they became universal, and were formed in all places where the Gospel had been planted.* To these assemblies, in which the deputies or commissioners of several churches consulted together, the name of *sy-*

nec ille, præter omnium conscientiam, faciat aliquid in eorum parochiis. The compiler then adds: "That canon does not speak of apostles, but of bishops. Whence it is apparent that, not in the time of the apostles, but after their death, many churches were associated in this manner, for the sake of a certain order and edification." *Unde patet, non tempore apostolorum; sed iis mortuis, ejusmodi ratione plures Ecclesias, propter ordinem aliquem et ædificationem, esse consociatas.*

* Tertullian de Jejuniis, cap. xiii.

nods was appropriated by the Greeks, and that of *councils* by the Latins; and the laws that were enacted in these general meetings were called *canons*, *i. e.* *rules*.

"These *councils*, of which we find not the smallest trace before the middle of this century, changed the whole face of the church and gave it a new form, for by them the ancient privileges of the people were considerably diminished." *

Similar to this, only more explicit, is the testimony of Neander. "Christianity," he writes, "produced among its genuine professors from the first a lively catholic spirit, and thence, also, an inward and mutual as well as outward connexion. This connexion must, from the nature of human things, assume a definite form, and this form was modelled after the existing form of those social connexions among which Christianity first made its appearance. A sisterly system of equality in the relation of the churches to each other would, independently of these particular circumstances, have best corresponded to the spirit of Christianity, and might have been most advantageous to its free and undisturbed publication. But these circumstances soon introduced a system of subordination into the relations of the churches to each other, into which Christianity might enter, just as into all other human institutions, which contain nothing that is sinful by its very nature; but this system afterwards obtaining too great sway, exercised a restraining and destructive influence on the development of Christian doctrines and life." †

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., cent. ii. part ii. chap. ii.

† Neander's Hist of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 207, 208.

Again, a little further on he writes,—"These provincial synods do not appear as a constant and regular institution, fixed to definite times, until the end of the second or the beginning of the third century; and it was in this case a peculiarity of one country, where particular local causes may have introduced *such* an arrangement earlier than in other regions. This country was, in fact, exactly Greece, where, from the time of the Achaic league, the system of confederation had maintained itself; and as Christianity is able to connect itself with all the peculiarities of a people, provided they contain nothing immoral, and entering into them, to take itself a peculiar form resembling them; so also it might easily happen, that here the civil fedral spirit, which already existed, worked upon the ecclesiastical catholic spirit, and gave it earlier than in other regions a tolerably good form; so that out of the representative assemblies of the civil communities (the Amphictyonic council), were formed the representative assemblies of the ecclesiastical communities (*i.e.*, the provincial synods). As the Christians, in the consciousness that they are nothing, and can do nothing, without the Spirit from above, were accustomed to begin all important business with prayer; they prepared themselves here also for their general deliberations by common prayer, at the opening of these assemblies, to Him, who has promised that he will enlighten and guide by his Spirit, those who believe in him, if they will give themselves up to him wholly; and that he will be amongst them, where they are gathered together in his name."*

"But this confidence, in itself just and salutary,

* Neander's Hist, of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. p. 212.

took a false and destructive turn, when it was not constantly accompanied by the spirit of humility and self-watchfulness, with fear and trembling; when men were not constantly mindful of the important condition under which alone man could hope to share in the fulfilment of that promise, in that Divine illumination and guidance—the condition, that they were really assembled in the name of Christ, in lively faith in him, and honest devotion to him, and prepared to sacrifice their own wills; and when people gave themselves up to the fancy, that such an assembly, whatever might be the hearts of those who were assembled, had unalienable claims to the illumination of the Holy Spirit; for then, in the confusion and the intermixture of human and Divine, men were abandoned to every kind of self-delusion, and the formula, 'by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit,' (Spiritu sancto suggerente,) might become a pretence and sanction for all the suggestions of man's own will."*

Such is the statement of these historians respecting the origin of synodical assemblies or councils. It is probable, however, that at first they were little more than friendly Christian meetings, held for the purpose of promoting brotherly love and unity amongst all the neighbouring churches of a province. Had they continued to be of this nature, little harm could have resulted from them. If the independent authority of every congregational church had been primarily guaranteed as a condition of union, so that nothing might be done at the provincial meetings tending to the subversion of the equal rights and antecedent liberties of the associated parties; the evil con-

* Neander's Hist. the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 213, 214.

sequences which ultimately grew out of them might have been avoided. But this was not the case. No fear was entertained, and therefore no such precautionary steps were taken. The power of associate authority rapidly grew. The churches were in the toils before they were aware of it. The mistaken views which were every where gaining ground respecting the necessity of a visible church-catholicity confirmed the position assumed by those who chiefly promoted the provincial meetings. Ultimately, that which had once been the expression of love became the iron bond of authority and despotism.

It is grateful to learn that there was *some* opposition to this newly-originated power of domination over the churches of Christ. "It appears," says Neander, "that this regular institution met at first with opposition as an innovation, so that Tertullian felt himself called upon to stand up in its defence."* Not only would some of the churches feel jealous of their own independent authority; but probably, now and then, their delegates and representatives would return home humbled and chagrined, on account of measures which they did not approve. For a season this kind of opposition would prevent the too rapid development of synodical authority in certain provinces, and hence the partial extent to which the innovation had advanced even in the days of Tertullian, in the first half of the third century.†

Here, however, was a great change leading to other changes, and directly subversive of the apostolic prin-

* Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. vol. i. p. 213.

† Tertullian, de Jejuniis, cap. xiii. speaks of the councils (concilia) as being held only in some places (*certis* in locis).

ciple of congregational Independency, both externally and internally. For a time—so long as things went on smoothly and all was harmony—each church might act out its own religious views, while, at the same time, all the churches might act in concert. But so soon as differences of opinion arose, either the minority must yield or the synod have only a nominal power to act in its representative character. Thenceforth only two courses remained open to any dissentient church in any particular province—blind submission or schism. As we have already intimated, there were some who refused this submission, and called in question the power of the synods themselves, alleging their novelty as a sufficient proof of their being unscriptural and unwarranted. But, on the other hand, the majority were prepared to submit. Rather than disturb the supposed harmony of the churches, they would conclude a dishonourable peace with the church's rulers, and, by the very concession, augment the power of synodical domination.

But now let us glance *again* at the change which transpired in the official representatives of the churches—the bishops and presbyters—now no longer one, but divided into two classes. We saw, a little way back, how it was that the one office became two; let us now trace the influence of the provincial synods in confirming the hierarchical distinction which had commenced, making it yet more marked and positive.

It is easy to imagine how, in any case where express provision is not made against it, the periodic association of numbers is apt to confer influence and authority upon a few who may occupy the post of presidents or leaders. In all deliberative assemblies this tendency

is exhibited ; and the introduction of a religious element or character into the composition of such assemblies, so far from diminishing aught from the tendency, seems rather to augment it. In ordinary cases ability to speak and superiority of judgment or piety ; or in cases of division, where party spirit reigns and rules, an acknowledged leadership at the head of any one of the parties ; is sufficient to make the distinction of which we are speaking. But, in the present case, the very office held by the bishops as the representatives of entire societies, would create for them a precedency over all other delegates, whether presbyters or private Christians, which courtesy would easily grant and custom would confirm. Thus, in the course of time, the distance between a bishop of a congregational church and his presbyters would be widened, and that which at first was only nominal would come to be a very grave reality. As it would be impossible for the members of all the churches to meet in the provincial gatherings, but only a few delegated by them ; private Christians would soon feel themselves quite subordinate to their own officers assembled with them. This feeling would beget indifference, and gradually the presbyters and bishops alone would be thought sufficient to manage the business of the representative assembly. If, in addition to this, the synods were generally admitted to have the power of determining matters of controversy or discipline ; it is apparent how the office which was once subordinate to the authority of the congregational church would soon rise above it, and, in many instances, would grow into a "lordship over God's heritage." The bishop of the congregational church would feel that he had now an authority derived from his connexion with the synod, which he

never had before, when he was simply a president over one Christian society. The presbyters, also, although subordinate to the bishop, were elevated above the people; and, perhaps, in most instances were willing to defer on the one hand, where they could claim precedence of office on the other. Thus both offices would be magnified beyond their just limits, and the authority of the congregational church would suffer in proportion.

We are not surprised, therefore, to find that about this period (the early part of the third century) a distinction came to be introduced between private Christians and their church officers which has continued to exist ever since. We refer to the names *clergy* and *laity*, with the corresponding ideas attaching to the two relative terms. Originally the first of these words was applied to all Christians—the whole flock of Christ.* It was not supposed that office in the church made a man worthy of Divine choice, or gave him a special title to a heavenly inheritance. So far was the apostle Paul from thinking so, that we find him fearing lest, after all his official service, he should be "cast away." Now, however, as the distinction between the people and their ministers became a practical thing, it required those distinguishing terms which are usually sought after in such cases; and the aggrandizing spirit of the church's officers led them to appropriate the term *clergy* to themselves.†

* 1 Pet. v. 3. "Neither as being lords over God's heritage;" where the word "heritage" should have been translated *clergy* (κλῆροι).

† In the fourth century the term clergy was not sufficient; and so the humble-minded ministers gave themselves the exclusive title of *Christians*, and spoke of *Christianity* as being theirs by right, and theirs only.—Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 170, note 2.

This use of the term was favoured by the erroneous views which were spreading at that time respecting the analogy between the Levitical priesthood and the Christian ministry. Even while the idea of an universal Christian priesthood was still faintly maintained,*—a spiritual priesthood for the offering up of spiritual sacrifices, "holy and acceptable to God," "through Jesus Christ, the great High Priest of our profession"—the idea of the Christian ministry being in an *emphatic* sense a priesthood, and official service a sacrifice, rapidly gained ground; and, harmonizing as it did with other erroneous church principles, it gave a consistency to the hierarchical practices of the age, which confirmed and consolidated them at last into one symmetrical but anti-scriptural whole. "The false conclusion was drawn," says Neander, "that as there had been in the Old Testament a visible priesthood, joined to a particular class of men, there must also be the same in the New; and the original evangelical notion of a general spiritual priesthood fell therefore into the back-ground. This error is to be found already in Tertullian's time (A.D. 223-245), since he calls the bishop "Summus sacerdos," high priest,† an appellation which was certainly not invented by him, but taken from a habit of speaking and thinking already prevalent in a certain part, at least, of the church. This name also imports that men already compared the presbyters with the priests; and the deacons, or spiritual persons generally, with the Levites. We can

* Irenæus, iv. 20, says "all the just have the sacerdotal order;" *omnes enim justi sacerdotalem habent ordinem.* Tertullian also, De Exhort. Castit. cap. 7, says, "and are not we laymen priests?" *nonne et laici sacerdotes sumus?*

† De Baptismo, cap. xvii.

judge from this how much the false comparison of the Christian priesthood with the Jewish, furthered again the rise of episcopacy above the office of presbyters. In general, the more they degenerated from the pure Christian view into the Jewish, the more the original free composition of the Christian church became changed."*

Thus one false step was succeeded by another; thus one erroneous notion engendered or coalesced with many more. The apparently trivial distinction between the presbyters or bishops and their president, led to a distinction between the use of the two originally synonymous names "presbyters" and "bishops;" this distinction of names led to further change in the idea of office, as designated by the two names; synodical meetings or councils divide the bishop from the presbyters yet more widely, and at the same time separate the Christian church into two classes, composed of clergy and laity. Yet further false notions creep in, whereby deacons and others are regarded as Levites, presbyters as priests,† and bishops as high-priests; and, finally, acting upon all these, and being reacted upon in turn, the idea of a visible catholic church cements the structure of anti-Christian error, and seeks to realize itself in the actual condition of the so-called church of Christ.‡

But we must now notice some collateral innovations, and the further changes which grew out of, or co-ordinately with them.

* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. vol. i. p. 197, 198.

† This is the origin of the term "priests" as applied to one of the "orders" of the Church of England.

‡ Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 257, 258.

The distinction between the clergy and laity was first made in the latter part of the second century.* Soon after this, the provincial synods came to be held regularly every spring and autumn, at least in many provinces † In connexion with these periodical meetings, the town-bishops gradually acquired great importance, as the organs by whom the country bishops, or chorepiscopi,‡ communicated to the assembly a knowledge of the state of things in their churches. By this means they came to be considered as superior to the country bishops, and had a kind of diocesan superintendence over them. In many cases the country churches received their ministers on the appointment of the town-bishop nearest to them; or, if they were permitted to choose their own ministers, it was on the understanding of a tacit subordination to the bishop and presbyters of the mother-church. In some instances, such churches were considered as only portions of the town-church, and were in all things subject to the town-bishop; a presbyter, or even a deacon, being appointed to take them under local supervision. Thus the way was prepared for diocesan episcopacy, in combination with presbyterial arrangements. In the middle of the third century, there were probably as many as six-and-forty presbyters in

* Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 170. Coleman's Antiquities, chap. ii. sec. iv.

† Ibid. p. 261.

‡ "After the number of Christians had greatly increased in the country, separate churches in the country were now frequently formed, which attached themselves either to the district (παροικία) of the nearest town-bishop, and received from him a presbyter or deacon; or chose their own bishops (χωρεπίσκοποι), who, however, soon came to be in a certain state of dependance on the nearest town-bishop."—Ibid.

the church at Rome, with Cornelius as bishop at their head; the churches, or rather branch-churches, in the neighbouring districts being subject to, and religiously provided for, by them. Congregational Independency became henceforth absorbed and destroyed by what Neander terms "the first great church union between the churches of the city and of the country, which together formed one whole."*

But this was not all. That which happened in respect to towns and their neighbouring villages, also took place in reference to cities and their neighbouring towns. Unity and uniformity were the order of the day. If village churches were not capable of managing their own affairs without the superintendence of the town church, why should town churches be thought capable of managing their own affairs without the superintending care of the church of the capital or metropolis? At the provincial synod, the bishop of the metropolis received more reverence and possessed more influence than the town-bishops. Why should he not be distinguised from them, even as they had been distinguished from their presbyters? What objection could there be to further subordination for purposes of order and union? Why not regard all the churches and bishops of the several towns as in some sense united under one head, in the person of the *metropolitan* bishop? This further change, then, was in effect brought about—gradually—by almost imperceptible degrees—at first only in the east—and in such a manner as not to involve an appearance of great assumption on the part of the metropolitans for some time; but,

* Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 208, 209.

ultimately, with results affecting the entire complexion of the church's constitution.*

These changes did not at present, as we have hinted, assume this form in the west; but were mainly confined to the east, where Christians and Christian churches were more numerous. There, Rome became the ecclesiastical metropolis of a great part of Italy, while in other parts the paucity of churches rendered hierarchical associations a matter of impossibility. It is easy to perceive how the establishment of these large ecclesiastical bodies would necessarily involve further changes, as time rolled by, and fresh occasions were created, or were supposed to be created, for additional authority and consolidation. If at first the cities in general were regarded as the centres of power and union; in the course of time the principal amongst these were regarded and spoken of as pre-eminent. Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, very soon acquired a celebrity beyond that of minor cities; and as they had been more nearly connected with the personal labours of the apostles and evangelists, a kind of precedence was given to them in the sentiments of the churches generally, which grew more and more powerful every day. They were called the *seats of the apostles*, the *mother churches*, and so forth.† When any question of a controversial kind arose, the first inquiry was, "How do these churches regard it? What is the opinion of those who have been for so long a time the guardians of apostolic traditions?" ‡

* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 209. Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 262.

† *Ecclesiæ, sedes apostolicæ, matrices ecclesiæ.*

‡ Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 210.

Thus the churches themselves, fallen away from their first regard for Scripture and forgetting their own responsibility, prepared the chain for their own necks.*

But sufficiently centralizing as the system of the church's constitution may now be thought to have become, there was a spirit of consolidation at work which did not allow the matter to rest here. If the cities in general, with their satellite dependencies, are to regard the "apostolic churches" as their centres of organization, why should not a further advance towards unity be made? Why should not Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch — the largest diocesan churches and so well suited for the purpose — be looked upon as the three general centres of influence and union? And—it was whispered—why should not the church of Rome, the capital city of the world, have the first place, as the nucleus of the whole ecclesiastical system? Many things seemed to favour this last idea.

The apostles Paul and Peter, it was asserted, had both taught the church at Rome, and had suffered martyrdom in that city. From Rome the greater portion of the nations of Europe had received the gospel. The bishops of Rome had early distinguished themselves by their benevolence to the remotest churches. By a central superintendence and agency at Rome, the general concerns of the churches in the Roman empire could best be directed. Rome con-

* We are reminded of the words of the poet:—

——— "No foreign foe could quell
Thy soul, till from itself it fell.
Yes! *self-abasement* paved the way
To foreign bends, and despot sway."

tained the apostolic mother church to which the greater part of the west appealed. Whatever took place at Rome would be best known to all, in consequence of the constant intercourse which existed between it and all other cities and towns. Even in the time of Irenæus, Rome was regarded in this twofold light; as an apostolic seat, and a central place towards which most of the traffic of the west tended —a place to which every church from time to time sent its delegates, either virtually or formally, and from which other churches received them in turn.*

The "church letters" which it was customary to give to those who moved from place to place, for the purpose of affording honourable testimonials to such as were recognized Christians, and of preserving the churches of the various districts of the empire from being imposed on by deceivers and impostors; connected all the churches under that at Rome, and contributed to augment its influence.† Of course there would be the greatest amount of intercourse with Rome on the part of the individual churches, on the one hand; and the value attached to a testimonial which emanated from the mother church would soon come to be practically felt everywhere, on the other.

* Iræneus, book iii. chap. iii. Ad hanc ecclesiam necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam. "It is a matter of necessity for the whole church (that is, through its individual members) to meet here." See Neander's note on this passage,—Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 210.

† Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 263, note 7. Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 210. These letters were termed "forms" and "letters of communion"—epistolæ formatæ, epistolæ communicatoriæ—*γραμματα τετυπωμενα, γραμματα κοινωνικα*. Other terms also were used, according to the specific object in view.

Thus all things conspired to augment the influence of the Roman church, and to make it a nucleus of ecclesiastical power. Still the pre-eminence enjoyed was purely conventional, and the result of a generally diffused sentiment of reverence, rather than of ecclesiastical enactment. All bishops were theoretically equal in dignity and power; and each in his own diocese was answerable to God only for his conduct. Cyprian (A.D. 256) is very decided in his views on this subject. According to him, the unity of the episcopate was derived from the harmony of the bishops in general;* neither did he allow that any one might be considered a bishop of bishops.† Even while a certain superior respect might be paid to the church at Rome, there was no concession of actual rights over the other churches.‡ Firmilian, of Cæsarea, a contemporary of Cyprian, speaks disparagingly and even contemptuously of the Roman authority, and sets it down as mere pretension.§ We are therefore compelled to regard the superiority of Rome at this period as sentimental rather than real.|| It could not be enforced for want of political power. It was often disputed with success. It was rather manifested in the spirit of a haughty and insolent bearing

* Cyprian, ep. lii. Episcopatus unus episcoporum multorum concordi numerositate diffusus.

† Ibid. in Conc. Carthag. Neque quisquam nostrum episcopum se esse episcoporum constituit.

‡ Ibid. ep. lv.; ad Cornelium, ep. lxxii.; ad. Stephanum.

§ Firmilian to Cyprian. Eos autem, qui Romæ sunt, non ea in omnibus observare, quæ sint ab origine tradita, et frustra Apostolorum auctoritatem prætendere, &c.

|| Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. pp. 221—225, 226; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 265—285, 286.

on the part of its bishop, than in any overt acts; and if it had not been favoured by some peculiar circumstances in after times, would probably have been only in a small degree more harmful than the previous changes which had come over the constitution of Christ's church.

There were, however, occasions even now, in which the Romish prelates attempted to rattle an artificial thunder of excommunication and anathema. Victor first, and Stephen afterwards, sought to "lord it over God's heritage," and indulged themselves in a wholesale excommunication of those churches which refused to follow their views.

The first of these, in A.D. 190, renounced communion with the churches of Asia Minor, because of a difference of opinion respecting the time of Easter; and the manner in which his spirit and conduct were resisted shews how different the position of a bishop was at that period from what we find it a few centuries later, and in the present day. Irenæus wrote him a letter in the name of the churches of Lyons and Vienna, in which he blamed him severely. He reminded him of the manner in which his predecessor, Anicetus, had yielded to better counsels than his own, and says, "We live together in peace, without regarding these differences; and the differences in our regulations about the fasts, makes our agreement in faith shine forth more clearly. . . . The apostle commanded us to judge no man in respect of meats or drink, or fasts, new moons, or Sabbaths. Whence, then, come controversies?—whence divisions? We celebrate feasts; but in the leaven of wickedness and evil, because we divide the church of God and observe outward matters, while we leave the weightier mat-

ters of love and faith untouched. We have nevertheless learned from the prophets that such feasts and such fasts are displeasing to the Lord."* Thus did the bishop of Lyons check the arrogance of the haughty bishop of Rome.

It was more than half a century after this, or A.D. 253, that Stephen endeavoured to obtain the ascendancy over the churches of Christ. A dispute had arisen of considerable magnitude, and affecting the position of many parties, as well as the custom of the church, respecting the validity of the baptism performed by heretics. Like most disputes, it was long agitated without being brought to a decision; and would probably have died away at last, the several parties following their respective opinions without prejudice to that of the rest. Stephen, however, grew impatient, and sought to terminate the controversy in a practical and violent manner. He excommunicated the bishops of Asia Minor, Cappadocia, Galatia, and Cilicia. His opinion was, that baptism by heretics was valid; while they considered it as no baptism at all, on account of the heresy of those who administered it. Besides renouncing communion with them, he gave a false interpretation to their views, and called them by the nickname of "Rebaptizers" and "Anabaptists."† The dispute, however, was not to be so easily settled. The violence of the Roman bishop fanned the flames of contention. The discussion extended to North Africa; and although the old Romish custom had been followed here by a certain party, it turned ulti-

* Neander's Hist. of the Christian Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 342, 343; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. pp. 215, 216.

† Ἀναβαπτισται

mately against Rome. Two synods were held at Carthage, A.D. 255, both of which determined that "the baptism of heretics was *not* to be considered as valid." Thus another instance was afforded of resistance to Romish pride, and even to Romish customs. "We are not governed by custom," said Cyprian, who was bishop of Carthage at the time, "but we are overcome by reason. Peter did not despise Paul because he had formerly been a persecutor of the church; but he received the counsel of truth, and easily acceded to the just reasons which Paul urged. He thus gave us an example of unity and patience; that we might not be too much enamoured of our own way, but might rather make that our own way which is suggested to us at times, with profit and advantage by our colleagues, if it be true and lawful." * The spirit of Stephen, however, remained unsubdued. When Cyprian wrote to him, conveying the resolutions of the synod, he replied with great warmth and offended dignity. He indulged in unworthy abuse of the bishops who had been deputed to wait upon him as the representatives of the North African church, refused to see or speak with them, and forbade his church to receive them into their homes. Doubtless he thought that by this mode of procedure he could compel his opponents to surrender their faith to him. But he was mistaken. Stephen appealed to the authority of the ancient Romish traditions, and spoke against innovation. "It is you," Cyprian replied, "who are the innovator, by thus breaking up the unity of the church. Whence is this tradition? Is it deduced from the words of the Lord, and from the

* Cyprian, ep. 71, ad Quintum.

authority of the gospels, or from the doctrine and the epistles of the apostles? Custom, which has crept in with some people, must not prevent truth from prevailing and triumphing; for custom without truth is nothing but antiquated error."* After this, Cyprian called together a more numerous council than before; to whom the whole matter was submitted afresh, and by whom the opinions of Stephen were again condemned.†

Such were the attempts of this period to push forward the pretensions of Rome. The spirit was there; but the power was wanting. A true prophet might have seen, even now, the elementary working of that fraudful and despotic character which afterwards became incarnate in the persons, and co-ordinate with the prerogatives, of the bishops of Rome. The stripling ambition, although at present harmless, gave this early indication of what it might become when matured and clothed with political power.

From all that has been advanced it will now be apparent how great the change which had come over the original condition of the church in this second post-apostolic age. The principles of Independency were now to a great extent undermined, if not in many places wholly supplanted. Too often professedly Christian men gave up their individual rights and responsibilities at the bidding of their spiritual guides. Liberty of conscience became rare. Every doctrine or opinion which did not square in with that of the visible catholic church was branded with the name of heresy;

* Cyprian, ep. 74.

† Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, &c. vol. i. pp. 226—228, 368—371. Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 285, 286.

and although the value of toleration might have been learnt by the experience which Christians had passed through in seasons of persecution, they seemed to be less and less tolerant of one another's differences, the farther time rolled by. In addition to this, the congregations of Christians had now very little of that self-government which was originally in their hands. They permitted their ministers gradually to become their lords; and were deluded, under plea of union and order, into compliance with a system of synodical association which entangled every church in its meshes, and ultimately deprived them all of their constitutional rights. As the natural result of these changes, the clergy augmented their powers daily, and became possessed of that independence which was once the boast of those for whom their offices had been instituted. Their orders were multiplied both in the Greek and Latin churches. Besides metropolitans, bishops, presbyters, and deacons, there were sub-deacons, acolyths, exorcists, readers, and doorkeepers.* Divine worship was in many things wholly corrupted from that simplicity which once characterized it. The ministry became proud and worldly, and the people formal. The simple service of the primitive Christians—who thought little of what was visible and outward, but much of what was spiritual and connected with the

* The *sub-deacons* (ὑποδιακονοι) attended the deacons in the execution of their duties, as the *acolyths* (ἀκολουθοι) attended on the bishop. The *exorcists* (exorcistæ) performed prayer over those supposed to be possessed of evil spirits. The *readers* (ἀναγνωσται) publicly read the Scriptures and kept the copies used for that purpose. The *door-keepers* (θυρωροι, πυλωροι, ostiarii) kept the places of assembly clean, opened the doors, &c. The Greek church never adopted the acolyths and exorcists.—See Neander's Hist. vol. i. p. 206; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 268.

thoughts and aspirations of the heart—became a matter of great show and pomp. During the first and second centuries no public edifices were erected expressly for Christian worship;* neither in the third were there many buildings for exclusively religious ends.† In times of public opposition and persecution secrecy was desirable, and private rooms or workshops, and even the tombs, were the places of assembly and worship.‡ Towards the close of this age, however, as circumstances favoured, and the wealth of the bishops accumulated, splendid structures arose here and there, which vied with the Jewish synagogues, and even, in some instances, with the temples of the heathen; and at the same time the wealth of a church, which became every day more and more worldly, exhibited itself in internal decorations,§ vessels of gold and silver,|| and gorgeous ecclesiastical robes for the various orders of the clergy. The bishop ascended his throne, and the presbyters their chairs,

* Even in Justin Martyr's time it was most common for Christians to meet in private houses. When asked by a magistrate "Where do you assemble?" his reply was, "Where each one can and will."

† At Edessa, it is said, a church-structure was erected A.D. 202. "In the third century the traces of buildings devoted exclusively to Christian worship became more frequent and obvious."—Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 272. See also Neander's Hist. of the Christ. Religion, vol. i. p. 329.

‡ Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. ii. part ii. chap. iv. sect. 8; Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. i. 273.

§ Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. iv. thinks it not improbable that images were used, which Gieseler doubts, Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 272; but which Neander approves, vol. i. p. 332.

|| Prudentius Περι στεφαν. Hymn II. referred to by Mosheim.

while the people humbly stood or kneeled around.* Baptism became an imposing ceremonial, and was thought to have a regenerating power when duly administered either directly by successors of the apostles, or by those who acted under their direction and sanction.† Confirmation became necessary, in order to the validity of baptism when performed by inferior orders of the clergy or others.‡ The Lord's Supper, once a simple and humble service of memorial, in remembrance of Christ, whose death it showed forth or exhibited as the foundation-fact of Christianity, and the basis of every truly Christian hope; was completely altered in its character, and converted into a sacrifice, which Christian priests alone could consecrate and offer.§ Marriage was constituted a

* The seats of the clergy were termed *cathedra* and *thrones* (καθεδροι, θρονοι). From the former term our word *cathedral* is derived.

† Gieseler, i. 277, mentions the preparations made for baptism, and the different classes through which candidates had to pass. See Neander, i. 363, for the effect of the notion of an "opus operatum" at this time prevalent.

‡ Such is the origin of confirmation. When the notion of the exclusively spiritual character of the bishops had been formed, it was supposed that they alone had the power of producing a real baptism of the spirit. Presbyters, however, and deacons might baptize. In order to make the practice of the church harmonize with the theory of the bishops' exclusive power, the rite of confirmation was introduced. "This idea," says Neander, "was fully formed as early as the middle of the third century. The bishops were, therefore, obliged at times to travel through their dioceses, in order to administer what was afterwards called *confirmation* to those who had been baptized by the parish priests—the clergy in the country.—Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 367.

§ In the time of Justin Martyr, and, later still, of Irenæus, this notion of a sacrifice in connexion with the material supper, had not

sacrament* amongst ordinary people, and virtually condemned when entered into by the clergy.† Asceticism sprang up into favour, and hermits left both the church and the world in order to lead a life of seclusion,—a circumstance not so much to be regretted when there was so much of corruption in both.‡

It was not likely that amidst all these changes the character of the clergy should remain unaltered. We find, therefore, that in addition to that pride which hierarchical pretensions always engender, there was much of a visible moral corruption amongst the leaders and functionaries of the professed church of Christ. "The change in the form of ecclesiastical government," says Mosheim, "was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonoured the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the church was committed. For, though several yet continued to exhibit to the world illustrious examples of primitive piety and Christian virtue, yet many were sunk in luxury and voluptuousness, puffed up with vanity, arrogance, and ambition, possessed with a spirit of contention and discord, and addicted to many

arisen. As, however, the idea of a Christian priesthood prevailed, this soon followed. Cyprian, in the middle of the third century, is the first in whose writings traces of this notion are found. Neander i. 382—384. The *table* now began to be called *altar*.

* Tertullian says, "How can we declare the happiness of that marriage, which is concluded by the church, sealed by the communion, and consecrated by the blessing of the church; which angels announce, and which our heavenly Father recognises as valid!"—Ad Uxor. ii. 8.

† See Mosheim, cent. iii. part ii. chap. ii. sect. 6, for an account of the indecent practices (Συνεισακτοι), which resulted from this.

‡ Mosheim, ibid. chap. iii. sect. 3; Gieseler, i. 289, &c.; Neander, i. 307.

other vices that cast an undeserved reproach upon the holy religion, of which they were the unworthy professors and ministers. This is testified in such an ample manner by the repeated complaints of many of the most respectable writers of this age, that truth will not permit us to spread the veil, which we should otherwise be desirous of casting over such enormities among an order so sacred. The bishops assumed, in many places, a princely authority, particularly those who had the greatest number of churches under their inspection, and who presided over the most opulent assemblies. They appropriated to their evangelical functions the splendid ensigns of temporal majesty. A throne, surrounded with ministers, exalted above his equals the servant of the meek and humble Jesus; and sumptuous garments dazzled the eyes and the minds of the multitude into an ignorant veneration for their arrogated authority. The example of the bishops was ambitiously imitated by the presbyters, who, neglecting the duties of their station, abandoned themselves to the indulgence and delicacy of an effeminate and luxurious life. The deacons, beholding the presbyters deserting thus their functions, boldly usurped their rights and privileges; and the effects of a corrupt ambition were spread through every rank of the sacred order."*

This is a general view of the innovations of this age. Many particulars are of necessity omitted in

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. iii. part ii. chap. ii. Waddington in his History of the Church, p. 36, complains of Mosheim as being "always extremely violent on this subject;" and yet in the very same page confirms all that Mosheim has said. "We admit," he says, "that the individual conduct of some, perhaps many, among the directors of the church, during the course, and

our brief statement. Neither have we, strictly speaking, carried the account of the long series of innovations up to the period embraced in the chronological heading of the present chapter. We have, however, approached it as nearly as is needful for so general a statement as that to which our space necessarily limits us. It is evident from what has been advanced, that this is the age in which most of the corruptions and changes, which affected the primitive institutions of Christianity, *originated*. It only remained for the church to take another step—if it could be done— in order to the complete subversion of the principles of Independency; namely, to ally itself to the secular power in such a manner as that it might become henceforth part and parcel of the kingdoms of this world.

Before we leave this age, however, it seems right to indicate the fact that *opposition* was frequently offered in various ways to the innovations which were introduced; and the further fact, that at present the appearance of popular, if not congregational power, was kept up in the election of ecclesiastical officers.

It was not likely that such grave changes as those

especially the conclusion of this century, deserved the reprehensions of contemporary and succeeding writers. Some assumption of the ensigns of temporal dignity—the splendid throne, the sumptuous garments, the parade of external pomp—indicated a departure from apostolical simplicity; and a contentious ambition succeeded to the devoted humility of former days. And though we believe this evil to have been exaggerated by all the writers who have dwelt upon it, since the abuses we have noticed could scarcely be carried to violent excess by an order possessing no legally recognised rights or property; we may still be convinced, by the institution of certain inferior classes in the ministry, that the higher ranks had made some advances in luxurious indulgence."

which we have stated, could be effected without some differences of opinion, and occasionally some resistance. While piety and a love of peace and order might favour the introduction of official distinction between bishops and presbyters, the same spirit for a season preserved the distinction from becoming too much marked. It was not all at once that the president amongst the presbyters became a permanent office; it was not all at once that the permanent president became known exclusively by the name of bishop; it was not all at once that the bishop acquired a real independent authority over the presbyters and people. In the time of Irenæus (A.D. 177—192), the names are interchangeable.* In the time of Tertullian (A.D. 245), the presbyters include the bishop as one of their number.† In the time of Cyprian (A.D. 258), the bishop never or seldom acted without the concurrence of his presbyters, in any matter of importance affecting the general interests of the church.‡ Cyprian himself asserts as much as this, and on one occasion apologized for having acted on his own independent authority in a case of emergency.§ Doubtless the reason for this gradual ope-

* Ireneus, iv. 26.

† Apologet. cap. 39.

‡ Cyprian, ep. v. A primordio episcopatus mei statui, nihil sine consilio vestro mea privatim sententia gerere. Sicut honor mutuus poscit, in commune tractabimus. "In the commencement of my episcopate I determined to do nothing in carrying out my own private opinions without your agreement. As our mutual dignity demands, let us act in common."

§ When Cyprian, separated from his church by calamitous circumstances, named to church offices men of his neighbourhood who had distinguished themselves in a season of persecution, he apologized before both the laity and clergy for his arbitrary conduct,

ration of change was to be found in the resistance offered in the customs, if not spirit, of the Christian congregations. It would have been too much to expect them to part with their rights all at once. Even after this period there was one privilege which they would not yield — in many instances, at least — namely, that of electing their officers. While hierarchical distinctions were permitted to take place almost without opposition, the right of election was retained for many centuries, and was not taken away at last without much conflict and even bloodshed.*

On account of the operation of the same spirit of resistance to innovation, it is difficult to ascertain the precise period when the independent power of the congregation was completely subverted and absorbed by synodical and diocesan authority. It is certain

and refers to his usual practice in the following terms: "We are accustomed to call you together to consult previously to the consecration to spiritual offices, and to weigh the character and merits of all in a general consultation."—Ep. xviii. quoted by Neander, Hist. of the Christian Religion, vol. i. p. 201.

* "In regard to the election into church offices the old principle was constantly abided by, that the consent of the church was required to ratify such an election, and that the church was at liberty to bring forward objections against it. That principle was recognised in the appointment of the episcopal office; it was the prevailing custom in the third century, and Cyprian deduced it from apostolic tradition, that the bishops of the province, with the clergy of the vacant church, made the choice in the presence of the congregation. Cyprian ascribed to the church the right of choosing worthy bishops, or rejecting unworthy ones."—Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 203, 204. "So late as the tenth century, an infringement of the claims of the people on the vacancy of a bishopric, was sometimes enough to occasion a civil war."—Vaughan's Life of Wycliffe, vol. i. p. 6, note 7, supported by testimonies.

that even so late as the fourth century there were, in *some* churches, congregational officers quite distinct from the bishop and presbyters of the diocese — remains of a former state of things, and indications of the change which had been effected.* As some trees retain the old and withered leaves of the last year's growth after the new leaves of this have made their appearance—as the broken columns and ruined monuments erected by a former generation are often seen side by side with the modern structures of a present—so the old congregational officers of the apostolic and next succeeding age remained, even so late as the fourth century, to remind the church of the progress of innovation and decay. It is evident, also, from such facts as these, that congregational rights were not directly

* In the North African churches, at the beginning of the fourth century, there were a class of leaders of the church under the name of elders of the people, "seniores plebis," who were expressly distinguished from the clerical body, and yet were considered as ecclesiastical persons (personæ ecclesiasticæ), who were representatives of the congregation. They were consulted by the clergy in matters of interest affecting the congregation, and they spoke in the name of the congregation when any complaint was to be made against the clergy. According to the letter of a Numidian bishop, Purpurius, *nothing could be done without their consent.* "Sine consilio seniorum nihil agebatur." Neander regards this as a remnant of the old congregational system which had not been done away with by the introduction of another system. In reply to those who think it an arrangement of a late period in the history of the church, borrowed from the civil forms of municipal government, he says, "It is far more probable of itself that this regulation should have been retained as a remnant of a freer spirit of church government, and propagated with some change in its circumstances."—Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 205, 206. In erecting the new ecclesiastical structure, the North Africans forgot to remove the foundations of the old!

subverted from within, but by means of a gradually increasing synodical power, which drew all the churches of a district or province together; first in friendly union, then into nearer association, and after that into catholicity of system and supervision; until at last the several independent parts became a united whole under one general head of rule and government. As the stars were once thought to have been formed out of nebulæ moving round upon a centre, and compressed by the action of centripetal and centrifugal forces, which ultimately gave form and unity to that which once floated loose and free as a vast aggregate of almost independent particles of matter; so the churches of Christ in the several provinces were gradually brought out of their independent state into one of subordination and oneness, by the action of synodical power on the one hand, and episcopal on the other.

We have already adverted to the opposition offered to the early institution of provincial synods.* They have been regarded by some as exercising a beneficial influence in respect to the temporal position of the Christian church. Unquestionably, confederation for the purpose of resisting unlawful aggression on the part of the civic power or the populace, would have been neither unscriptural nor harmful, if that resistance had been simply moral, and if confederation had terminated upon that object. The apostle of the Gentiles could say with all consistency, "Is it lawful to beat a Roman, and uncondemned?"—could carry his appeal to Cæsar, awaiting the issues of a legal tribunal in a Christian spirit. And if *he* could do so,

* See back, p. 219.

Christians in general are not forbidden by the gospel of Paul to strengthen one another's hands against unlawful procedures, whether on the part of governors and magistrates, or the rabble. But the confederation to which reference is now made did not terminate here. It did not leave the confederate parties independent. It became a new framework of ecclesiastical government.* While strengthening the churches in their relation to the world, it weakened them in their relation to one another. While throwing up a means of defence against the outward foe, it suppressed the freedom of action within. The very walls which excluded the invader, enclosed the citizens within a narrower circle of operations, and brought them into a manageable compass for the purposes of official despotism.† Great as may have been the ambition of the episcopal order, we question whether their power would ever have increased to those dimensions which have made the very name of bishop the symbol of rapacity and spiritual lordship, if it had not been fostered by the synodical confederations in the midst of which it first arose.‡

It is not wonderful, then, that the people in many instances resisted the growth of this new authority over their liberties, so soon as they came to under-

* "At last the participation of the churches was entirely excluded from these synods, and at length the bishops alone decided every thing in them."—Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 214.

† "The provincial synods were serviceable towards setting distant parts of the church in connexion with each other, and maintaining that connexion."—Ibid.

‡ "By means of their connexion with each other in these synods, their power (*i. e.* of the bishops) was constantly on the increase."—Ibid. Also Gieseler's Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 171.

stand its real character. The multiplication of sects and heresies in the third century * was the evidence and fruit of this resistance. In many cases, probably, men were driven to extreme views and apparently schismatic conduct by the very means used to bring about unity. It is the nature of force, when used to procure agreement in matters of opinion, to divide instead of uniting—to drive men from one another into factions, the most powerful of which generally acquires the name of the orthodox party, while all the rest are heterodox and heretic.† It frequently happens, moreover, as in this case, that those who triumph over their opponents by the use of these unhallowed means, have the advantage of handing down to posterity their own opinions, and of aspersing those which they once formally condemned. If many of those sects, as they are termed, had been permitted to transmit their *own* account of their opinions and practices on the page of history, it is more than probable that the judgment of modern times would have reversed that of their catholic traducers; and we should have learnt to weep over the oppression to which they were subjected when living, instead of being misled by the defamation which has dishonoured them

* Neander's Hist. &c. vol. i. p. 237; Waddington's Hist. of the Church, chap. v.; Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. iii. part ii. chap. v.

† Mosheim has a section headed "The vicious methods of controversy now employed." The third century was the age of pious frauds for the purpose of deceiving the heathen, and suppressing Christian liberty. The *canons* called apostolical, the *apostolical constitutions*, the *Clementines*, &c. were palmed off on the church now, in support of the catholic doctrines and episcopal power. See Gieseler, Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 206—211. See Appendix C.

when dead.* The broken rays of light which steal in upon us through the darkness of past centuries, are sufficient to show that, as in modern times, so in this age of innovation, there were *puritans*, branded by that name, which has so often been used as a term of reproach against the friends of simplicity and truth.† The very name, however, serves to embalm their memory, and is in itself an indication of existing heresy and corruption amongst those who used it.

"In the first ages of the church," is the language of a modern preacher, "the name of Christian was identical with all that could elevate and ennoble. It signified no faint convictions, no questionable motives, no equivocal condition. The zeal it spoke of was an inextinguishable flame; the hope it argued, an anchor immoveable before the rudest tempest. The joys of which it was the symbol were as life amidst the dead; the charity it signalized warm as maternal tenderness, and gentle as the dews of heaven. No danger could alarm, no opposition quell, that spirit of active beneficence it was known to indicate. The fury of the persecutor, and the derision of the scorner, were alike powerless before it. He who possessed it, stood, composed and dauntless, against the combined

* Waddington admits that the charges made against the early heretics should be received with great caution; because their own answers are lost, and because they are not substantiated by any authentic records. Hist. of the Church, p. 59.

† The Novatians were called Puritans (καθαροι) because for a long time they contended for a primitive purity and simplicity of church discipline.—Gieseler, i. 284, 285; Neander, i. 255—268. Waddington seems to sympathize with those who with Cyprian considered them fanatics. Of course they were so, if they thought, as they did, of restoring apostolic discipline in a corrupt age and church.

assaults of calumny and outrage, and of earth and hell. As if a shield of adamant were stretched above his head,—as if a buckler of triple brass begirt his bosom,—he was insensible to weakness, and incapable of fear. He might fall; but he could not fly. He might perish; but he could not yield. His blood might be spilt upon the ground; but his hope could not waver, nor his honour be trampled in the dust. You might crush his limbs with torture,—his affections with solitude,—his name with infamy, and his freedom with the dungeon and the chain; but he bore within him an imperishable principle, which you could not crush nor impair—it was the energy and power of *faith*. And this, like electric fire, acquired force by resistance, and intensity by repression; and borrowed increase of splendour from surrounding gloom. The sun might have been staid in his career, and the stars have failed from their course; the moon might have forgotten her brightness, and the tides of the ocean their return; the fragrancy of spring might have departed, and the fruitfulness of summer sickened, and the blast of wintry desolation swept and deformed the year; all earthly light might have faded, and all joy and beauty withered and passed away; but this living flame could never languish—this ethereal spirit never could expire. Here was the fragment of a new creation,—the germ and rudiment of a yet unfashioned world—infolding in itself the embryo of that last form of perfected existence in which the great Parent Mind would finally enshrine the revelations of his power and glory. It possessed a depth of essence, and a plenitude of being, fitted to survive convulsion, and to foster decay. It could only waste with the waste of that eternal spring from whence it was de-

rived, and hence subsisted in perennial fulness, and poured its renewing influences with an unfailing stream.

"Christianity was then the religion of heroes,—of saints, apostles, and martyrs. It belonged to them 'of whom the world was not worthy.' It transformed all it touched into its own celestial likeness; enduing its subjects, of whatever age or condition, with an inflexible constancy, and an exhaustless ardour, before which the virtues of the patriot or the warrior were beheld with diminished lustre, and dwindled into ordinary things. To be a Christian then was to hold fellowship with uncreated wisdom; to drink of the fountain of primeval purity; and to breathe the soul of a philanthropy as unquenchable as it was unrestrained. It was to tread in the footsteps of Jesus, and to partake the mind of God. The pity with which a Christian then was animated, was the same that wept in Gethsemane and bled in Golgotha. The sanctity with which he was arrayed was in essence that of Him who was 'holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.' The fervour which impelled him had once looked on dissolution in its most hideous form, and said, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!' The energy which bore him onward was no other than that which made death vital, and mortal agony the source of endless beatitude, as it lighted the features and gleamed from the eye, which were now dimmed, and shrouded, and closing, on the cross.

"Such was a Christian then; and has that solemn designation declined in any measure from the import which it once included? Has it come to signify a less exalted character, either of sentiment or obligation?

Does it mean less than that we who have assumed it have 'tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and felt the powers of the world to come?'—that we are 'not in darkness, neither of the night, but have become children of light and of the day,' while, 'from the empire of Satan we have passed into the kingdom of the Son of God?' Do we call ourselves, by its assumption, anything less illustrious than a 'royal priesthood, and a peculiar people;' followers of God as his dear children—fellow-citizens with the saints, and members of his household?' What mean we by it, except that we are not our own, but bought with a price; that we should glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are God's?' Has it now become less energetically true that 'if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his?' or, can we justify its application to a meaner standard than that of having 'the same mind in us which was in him?'"*

The age of which we now write was not one of those to which this stirring description relates; and no wonder, therefore, if the name of "puritan" was given to those who sought to revive a character that had been lost. So great was the change which had come over apostolic institutions and doctrines, that the very existence of the Church was endangered. Not that the body of professedly Christian men had diminished; nor that the church of Christ, so called, was threatened with any peculiar dangers from the state. The perils that beset those who assumed to represent the doctrines and principles of the religion of Jesus to the world, at the present time, were spiritual perils.

* Discourses by the late Dr. M'All, vol. ii. p. 191—194.

Satan was transforming himself into an angel of light; and his ministers were appearing as the ministers of righteousness. The word of revelation was giving place to creeds and confessions, and the dogma of the priest; faith was supplanted by ceremony; sacramental efficacy was becoming the substitute for sanctification by the spirit; prayers were becoming barren forms, in which supplication was made for the dead as well as for the living; penitence of spirit and contrition for sin withdrew to the desert, in the bosom of monks and anchorets, that the mere penitential robe and posture, and service, might have ample space for displaying themselves in the church; a simple worship was exchanged for one of pride, show, and worldly grandeur; and charity, refused an earthly asylum, returned again to its original home in heaven. In such a period as this, the great danger threatening the church was that of being condemned altogether; for having "a *name* to live," while almost everywhere there were the premonitory symptoms of spiritual death.

We have thus endeavoured to indicate the operation of *a series of changes*, which affected the primitive constitution of the Christian church, and broke down piece by piece the original framework of apostolic organization. Here and there individuals, and even societies, might be found, who retained in secret their spiritual liberties; but the general state of things was as we have described. It will have become apparent already to the thoughtful reader, how inevitably one false step leads to another; how the simplest departure from *revealed principles* makes way for further and more destructive error;—a lesson which becomes only the more impressive as we advance to other periods.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THIRD POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF SUBVERSION.

[A. D. 324—1073]

In the last chapter we saw how the first two principles of Independency were affected by the innovations of the second and third century. We have now to show how the third principle was affected by the changes which succeeding centuries brought to light. Up to this time we have seen the church undergoing a great and visible alteration; falling away in spirit from the primitive pattern, and becoming more and more assimilated to the kingdoms of this world. As yet, however, the opportunity has not presented itself for forming an alliance with, much less for wielding the actual power of, an earthly political government. In many seasons of the church's early history, we behold her suffering, lacerated, bleeding, under the fang of persecution; and only now and then favoured with a short respite from the tenacious pursuit of her enemies. Towards the close of the third century, however, and at the commencement of the fourth, the civil power began to take a different view of the new religion and its abettors. Christians had become too numerous, and their influence too great, to be treated with absolute contempt. They were therefore either feared or favoured; either punished with the utmost severity, or patronized. In the time of Septimius Severus, much suffering was endured from popular

rage and the avarice of the governors; more especially after the emperor had forbidden the adoption of Christianity in A.D. 203. Under Caracalla, Elagabalus, and Severus Alexander, (A.D. 211—235) these persecutions ceased. Maximin, the Thracian, either excited or sanctioned a new burst of persecution against both the Christian clergy and the Christian people. In the time of Gordian, and Philip the Arabian, the storm subsided for a period of about eleven years; after which Decius and Gallus, with fearful vengeance, directed their worldly power against the professors of the Christian faith. Valerian took a little breathing time; but afterwards renewed the persecution. Gallienus was the first to put a stop to it by a law of toleration, in A.D. 261; and although Aurelian and Galerius had it at heart to follow in the footsteps of their persecuting predecessors, little injustice was done to the Christians during a long period. In A.D. 303, Diocletian, moved by superstition and the persuasions of the enemies of the Christian faith, caused the church in Nicomedia to be destroyed, and issued four edicts in succession against the Christians, the object of which was their utter extermination. Seldom or never had a more violent persecution been set on foot; and martyrs and apostates were alike abundant. This storm continued, with different degrees of violence, in the various provinces of the Roman empire, until (A.D. 312) Constantine becoming sole lord of the West, issued, in conjunction with Licinius, ruler of the European East, an edict of universal toleration, followed the next year by a particular edict in favour of the Christians. This edict was issued from Milan, and soon after became valid over the whole Roman empire. From

this period the Christians were favoured, and even patronised; and in A.D. 324, after obtaining a victory over Licinius his competitor, Constantine openly professed the Christian faith.

From this period the third post-apostolic age begins. Henceforth, with little exception, the position of the Christian church in relation to the empire, was entirely changed. The Christians were favoured in every possible way; assistance was rendered to them in the erection of churches, sometimes of the most splendid character, and in furnishing their revenues out of the common fund of the cities. The seat of government was transferred from Rome to Byzantium, afterwards called Constantinople; the highest offices of state, and inferior posts of honour, were open to Christians; the revenues of heathen temples were converted to the use of Christian churches; and paganism, in its turn, occupied the position of obloquy and persecution which Christianity had once sustained. Although the actual relations between the church and the state were not legally defined, Christianity became from this time the established religion of the Roman empire. In the year A.D. 350, when the whole empire devolved on Constantius, all sacrifices were prohibited for the first time, on pain of death; and heathenism was obliged to conceal itself in the country, and in corners remote from observation. During the reign of Julian the Apostate, a short season of reverse happened to the Christians, in which their privileges were taken from them, and they were forbidden to appear as public teachers in the schools of literature (A.D. 361—363). His successors, Jovian, Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, and Valentinian the Second, adopted the policy of the Constantines; and Theo-

dosius the Great waged war in many a bloody contest against the paganism of the east. In A.D. 392, he forbad all kinds of idolatry by the most severe punishments; two years after, interdicted sacrifices in the most practical of all methods, namely, by refusing to defray their costs out of the imperial purse; and even called upon the senate to declare themselves in favour of Christianity. Although in various parts of the world the spirit of persecution still manifested itself, as it has done in every age, from this time we find a close connexion existing between the professors of the Christian faith and the empire.* It now devolves upon us to notice the effect produced on the constitution and organization of the church by this greatly altered state of things.

The direct tendency of the patronage now extended to Christian professors, was to augment their numbers, comfort, respectability, and wealth. The religion of Jesus became for the first time a fashionable religion. No longer held in contempt by magistrates and rulers, no longer excluded from temples and courts, no longer proscribed by legal enactments, but, favoured and fostered by the hand of power, it proceeded on a march of easy conquest, and won its way amongst all classes. It need scarcely be said, that its progress was not "pure and undefiled." While professors abounded, the faithful were but few. The name had been changed; those who were once "heathens" were now "Christians;" but the formality remained. The general result

* See Gieseler's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. pp. 191-198, 316-327, for a succinct and accurate account of the various fortunes of the church in the times of the Roman emperors. The above facts are mainly derived from him. For a more full account, see Neander's Hist. i. 80—160.

was an increase of corruption in the church at large, while its officers and instructors became to a great degree mere worldly functionaries in the performance of sacred duties. Thus the way was prepared for any alterations in the constitution of the church which future circumstances might dictate. * If in past times the transition from primitive modes of worship and institutions had been too easy and rapid, much more so was this the case now.

Besides this, the relation into which the church was brought with the civil power, gradually altered the whole complexion of its constitution. While, on the one hand, all religious parties greedily sought after patronage, that party which had assumed to itself the name "catholic church," made exclusive pretensions to the privilege; and in consequence the emperor was virtually called upon to decide which was *the* church, and what doctrines and institutions were those of a genuine Christianity He therefore assumed the supreme power over the sacred body, together with the right of governing it as he thought fit. No opposition was offered; the church was prepared to become subordinate to imperial power for the sake of imperial patronage. Councils were established by the authority of the emperor; representatives from all the churches in the Christian world were gathered together, under an imperial presidency, to determine all matters of faith and practice; and thus that community which ought to have been separate from the world, as the meek and modest spouse of Christ, became visibly, and without any manifestation of shame, the adulterous handmaid of the state.*

* "To put an end to division, the emperors called *general*

Thus the principle of *aggregate* Independency was completely subverted, and the other principles of Independency more and more. No longer were the congregations of faithful men independent republics, having power to manage their own religious affairs. No longer were Christians taught to regard the word of God as the only standard of appeal, in all matters affecting faith, conscience, and religious duty. No longer were the ministers of religion ministers of Christ alone, and servants of the churches. No longer was there the exhibition of an union between Christians and Christian churches, on the basis of a simple charity, and on terms of perfect confidence and good will. All was changed. Instead of the word, were the decisions of œcumenical or universal councils. Instead of congregational self-government, there was monarchical power exercised by the *bishops* in each diocese, in conjunction with *metropolitan* power in each province, and *patriarchal* power in each large division of the Christian world; while all was kept in a state of subordination to the *imperial* power, by means of the œcumenical or general council. Offices were multiplied; the possessions of the church increased; as much of uniformity prevailed as was compatible with the smallest degree of liberty; the grand idea, which had been revolved only in visions and in dreams by the ambitious ecclesiastics of the second and third centuries, was now realized; and a *visible*

councils (σύνοδοι σικουμενικαί), elevated their decisions into laws of the realm, and applied worldly power to enforce them universally." Gieseler i. 329. Constantine called the *first* universal or œcumenical council at Nice in A.D. 325.

catholic church was everywhere settling itself down on the foundations of a political supremacy.

It is interesting to notice the circumstance that, even at this period, there were not wanting those who deeply felt the corruptions of the age, and sighed for a former state of things. A sect—so called by those who had power enough to give such a name to all who differed from them—existed at this period, whose principles were those of primitive Independency. "About this time," says Mosheim,* "Ærius, a presbyter monk and semi-Arian, erected a new sect, and excited divisions throughout Armenia, Pontus, and Cappadocia, by propagating opinions different from those that were commonly received. One of his principal tenets was, that bishops were not distinguished from presbyters by any divine right: but that, according to the institution of the New Testament, their offices and authority were absolutely the same. How far Ærius pursued this opinion, through its natural consequences, is not certainly known; but we know, with the utmost certainty, that it was highly agreeable to many good Christians, who were no longer able to bear the tyranny and arrogance of the bishops of this century. There were other things in which Ærius differed from the common notions of the time; he condemned prayers for the dead, stated fasts, the celebration of Easter and other rites of that nature, in which the multitude erroneously imagine that the life and soul of religion consists. His great purpose seems to have been that of reducing Christianity to its primitive simplicity; a purpose, indeed, laudable

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. iv. part ii. chap. iii.

and noble when considered in itself, though the principles from whence it springs, and the means by which it is executed, are generally, in many respects, worthy of censure, and may have been so in the case of this reformer." Such is the statement of Mosheim. Others have mentioned the name of Ærius amongst the heretics and schismatics of that day. It is evident, however, even from the testimony of enemies (for such testimony alone has reached us), that the principles of this sect were too pure and scriptural to flourish in an age of such abounding corruption.

About the same period, some amongst the reputed orthodox, winking at corruption, and remaining in connexion with a hierarchical system, were conscientiously compelled to remonstrate against the headlong progress of the church into worldly connexions and changes; and the voice of one, in particular, has reached us, as a proof at once of the felt corruptions of the times, and of the correctness of the principles which the Ærian Independents of that day maintained. Such a man as Jerome, or rather Hieronymus, would not have expressed himself so strongly as he has done in reference to the primitive and apostolic government of the church, in contrast with the customs of his time, if there had not been a pretty general diffusion of similar sentiments on the subject. "Among the ancients," he says in his commentary on the *Epistle to Titus*, "presbyters and bishops were the very same; but by little and little, in order that the plants of dissension might be plucked up, the whole management was intrusted to one individual. As the presbyters, therefore, *know* that they are subjected to him who was their president, *by the custom of the church;* so the bishops know that they are greater

than the presbyters, more *by custom* than by the principle of *any appointment of Christ*." *

It is refreshing to hear such a voice as this in the midst of so much error and unscriptural formalism. It was not possible, however, for the truth to prevail in a church which had deliberately substituted human opinions and practices for the revealed doctrines and institutions of the gospel. Step by step, therefore, the work of subversion went on. For a long period the bishop of Constantinople, and the bishop of Rome, who were the most eminent amongst the bishop-patriarchs of the period, contended with one another for superiority of power, and supremacy over the rest. The influence of the former was, for a season, so augmented by the resourses of the imperial government at Constantinople, as practically to predominate. But, in consequence of various circumstances too numerous to mention, Rome was enabled to gain the lost ground, and came off in the end triumphant.

For a long time, however, this supremacy was only nominal in some of the provinces of Christendom. The Britons and Scots, the churches of Gaul and Spain, and even of Italy to some extent, resisted the pretensions of Rome. Previous to this, a wide-spread sentiment of disgust had been created by the ambition and the usurpations, the rapacity and the worse vices, of the so-called successors of St. Peter. A schism, in feeling, had already been created between the eastern and western churches; and if favouring circumstances had permitted, the yoke of domination, which was becoming unbearable, would have been thrown off by

* Hieron, Comm. in Tit. i. 1. See Mason on Episcopacy, edited by the Rev. J. Blackburn, chap. ix.; also Gieseler, i. 443, note 38.

many who were in close connexion with the church of Rome. But it was apparently an inevitable thing that the ecclesiastical supremacy of "anti-Christ" should grow and prevail, in order to teach the nations of Europe, by painful experience, the folly of departing from Scripture in matters of religion. Everything seemed to be converted into a means of aggrandizing the Roman power. The invasion of the barbarians of the North, which weakened and ultimately destroyed the empire, paved the way for the further advances of the popedom.* The superstitious hordes were a prepared people; and Rome was cunning enough to know how they might be converted into friends. She became "all things to all men," in a sense never intended by the apostles of the Gentiles. The greatness of her terror at the time of the invasion of the barbarian chiefs was only equalled by the greatness of her craft afterwards. She meekly suffered what could not be avoided; soothed down the angry passions of the invaders, by splendid spectacles suited to impose upon the imagination of the uncivilized; asserted her independence and complete separation from all civil power; took their vices under a moderate system of regulation, which checked their progress, while it did not alter their enormity; and in the end received blind submission, where at first she had feared complete destruction. The influence of the monks, also, who had now become very numerous, was almost wholly exercised in favour of the Roman bishop. This was only a natural exchange of friendly offices. The monks found favour at Rome against the subordinate bishops, in the neighbourhood of whose jurisdiction they might

* Guizot's Hist. of Civilization, European Lib. vol. i. p. 99.

happen to live; and regarding the power of the pope as almost pledged on their behalf, they made his cause their own, and represented him as a sort of God to the multitude, over whom they had acquired a great influence.*

In this way the power of Rome grew among the masses of the people, whilst the apparent gentleness and the undoubted tact of some of the popes procured friends of an unexpected character. Gregory the Great,† in the sixth century, wielded the crozier with consummate ability, and augmented the spiritual powers connected with his see to a large extent. The very spirit of Roman policy seemed to be incarnate in this man, and to have been confirmed by him in its leading characteristics at the same time.‡ All possible contradictions met in his person. Obsequious and haughty, conciliating and obstinate, benevolent and

* The monastic system took root in the fourth and fifth centuries. Basil, in A.D. 360, first established the monastic vow. The general spread of the system was contemporaneous with the barbarian conquests. The Basilian and Benedictine monks were the principal orders of this period.—Waddington's Hist. of the Church, chap. xix.

† Gregory's character has been the subject of much discussion. Gibbon has drawn a fine portraiture in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xlv. Jortin says, "He was an ambitious, insolent prelate under the mask of humility!"—Remarks, vol. iv. p. 403. England has reason to remember Gregory, inasmuch as he sent over Augustine, with forty monks, in A.D. 596, who is said to have converted Ethelbert, and who certainly became the first archbishop of Canterbury and primate of the British church. By this means England became involved in popery; and but for this a pure faith might have prevailed, as it did in many parts of Britain long before the mission of St. Austin.

‡ The character of the man is illustrated by the following anecdote:—A schismatic, named Stephanus, came to Rome, and offered

selfish, as his designs might appear to determine, he acquired a personal and official influence never possessed before, and seldom transcended afterwards. He felt his way cautiously, and enlarged the spiritual dominions of Rome to an incredible extent almost before men were aware of it, until he became in reality a temporal sovereign, only without the name. His ambassadors, under the name of "legates," were received at every court with all respect; and by a skilful manœuvre he so managed it, that none could be elevated to the distinctions of metropolitan episcopal power, without receiving his sanction and swearing fealty to Rome.* He was also the first to claim the power of the keys for the successor of St. Peter; inculcated the doctrine of purgatory, pilgrimage, and the sanctity of relics; instituted the canon of the mass; and added all possible splendour to the ceremonies of the church.

Meanwhile the power of the emperors visibly decayed. One usurpation after another divided and weakened it. The ancient city, associated for so many ages with the images of greatness, stood out in yet bolder relief than before, in consequence of the fading glory of the dismembered empire; and was all the more safe from peril because of its supposed sacredness as the seat of spiritual dominion.

to return to the church, if Gregory would take upon himself the risk of his soul, and guarantee that his return should be sanctioned in heaven. Gregory undertook this, without hesitation! Baronius, Annals 500, sect. 26.

* This was by means of the *pallium*, or vest,—a mere article of dress, which was sent to the metropolitans approved of by Rome, without which they were not to ordain bishops. By this artifice it came to pass that the metropolitans found it needful to repair to Rome to receive the pallium, and ultimately to swear fidelity, before they could have it.

After this (A. D. 610), Boniface the Third persuaded the tyrannical Phocas to take from the bishop of Constantinople the title of *œcumenical*, or universal bishop, and bestow it on the Roman pontiff: and thus a *nominal* priority and supremacy was acquired. It is in keeping with the pretensions of Rome, then and in subsequent periods, that this pre-eminence should have been conferred by one of the most odious, bloodthirsty, abominable tyrants that ever disgraced the page of history.*

It would be useless to crowd our pages with a mere list of those events which happened between this period and the age of Hildebrand. We propose, therefore, only to state such matters as greatly affected the constitution of the church during this age of increasing change and subversion.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, we discern the operation of remarkable causes, leading to a great accession of power on the part of the Roman pontiff. The barbarous nations who had avowedly received the gospel, were instructed in so feeble and imperfect a manner as to transfer their former religious notions to the religion which they had embraced; and as there was nothing in the character or teaching of the bishops and other orders of the church that served to correct the idea, they came to consider them only as a new class of priests, identical with those to whom they had been previously subject. The bishop of Rome reaped all the advantage arising from this perverted view of things. He was regarded with an excessive and servile veneration; and received all the honours which had formerly been

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. vii. part ii. chap. ii.

rendered to the arch-druid of the barbarian worship. Thus his authority over his new spiritual subjects was boundless; and, instead of checking the spirit engendered by ignorance and superstition, he endeavoured to strengthen and foster it in every possible way.* Hence the arrogant and despotic temper which from this time began to characterize the Roman druid. Hence the pernicious opinion, that those whom he excommunicated forfeited not only their civil rights, but the common privileges of humanity. Hence, ultimately, the growth of that spirit of war in the bosom of the church, which converted the temple of peace and love into an arena of sanguinary conflict and a theatre of desolations.

Other circumstances transpired, in the course of the last of these centuries, tending to the future stability and progress of the Roman domination. In A.D. 751, Pepin of France having assembled the states of the realm for the purpose of procuring a formal title to the honours of majesty, which he had usurped by the deposition of his sovereign, determined to consult the Bishop of Rome respecting the lawfulness of his conduct. The question transmitted by Pepin to Zachary, the then pontiff, was "Whether the Divine law permitted a valiant and warlike people to dethrone a timid and indolent monarch, and to substitute in his place one more worthy?" The pretended successor of St. Peter had now a favourable opportunity for showing that his jurisdiction was spiritual only, and did not permit him to decide a question so entirely political. But he was in need of assistance against the Greeks and Lombards; and therefore returned a

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. viii. part ii. chap. ii.

favourable answer, in order to secure the friendship of the Franks. Nor was he unrewarded. From this period a strong bond of attachment was formed between the kings of France and the Roman see. In A.D. 754, Pepin advanced to the aid of Stephen the Second, the successor of Zachary, at the head of a numerous army; defeated Aistulphus and the Lombards, compelling them to deliver up to the see of Rome the exarchate of Ravenna, Pentapolis, and all the cities, castles, and territories which had been taken from the Roman dukedom; and in the next year, by a special grant, conferred the exarchate of Ravenna and Pentapolis upon the Roman pontiff and his successors. Thus the bishop of Rome became, in *fact*, a temporal prince. In A.D. 774, Charlemagne, the son of Pepin, again came to the assistance of Rome against the Lombards, overturned their empire, banished their monarch, proclaimed himself king, and not only confirmed the grants made by his father, but added several cities and provinces in Italy, which had not been included in it. In A.D. 800, the same emperor, seizing a favourable opportunity, set out for Rome, and managed to have himself proclaimed the sovereign of the West. And now the policy of Zachary's answer to the question of Pepin became very observable. But for the friendship which it cemented between France and Rome, the latter would by this time have probably absorbed the jurisdiction of the pontiff. As it was, Charlemagne reserved for himself the supreme dominion only, and even granted to the church of Rome, at the suggestion of its ambitious head, the real jurisdiction over that city and its annexed territory. Thus the power of the Roman pontiffs became greatly consolidated. From time to

time, however, it was rendered palpable enough, that the Roman bishopric was subordinate to the emperors. In some instances, the choice of the successor of St. Peter was determined by the sovereign; neither was he for a long period absolutely independent of the secular power.

Generally speaking, the character of the popes from this period was anything but such as became the professed heads of a large religious body; and of some it may be said, that their very names pollute the page of history. Such were the arts and intrigues practised at times, in order to obtain the Roman episcopate, that it is little to be wondered at that the successors of St. Peter should be so generally corrupt.

In the ninth century, an event is said to have happened which interrupted the pure and even flow of this much vaunted succession. Between the pontificate of Leo the Fourth, who died A.D. 855, and Benedict the Third, a certain woman, disguising her sex, made good her way to the papal chair, and sustained the dignity and honours of the Roman pontificate during about two years. This extraordinary person is generally known by the title of Pope Joan. Some have disputed the fact; but, until the Reformation, it was neither considered incredible in itself, nor ignominious to the character of the church. In modern times, the advocates of the papacy have endeavoured, naturally enough, to throw discredit upon a portion of the papal history, so startling and so unwelcome.

Shortly after this time, an event of another kind happened, which augmented the power of the Roman see, and was attended with results affecting the future

progress of the popedom. After the death of Louis the Second, surnamed the Meek, a fierce war broke out between his sons, each of whom contended for the empire. John the Eighth, at this time the Roman pontiff, eagerly seized the opportunity, in conjunction with the Italian princes, of nominating the successor to the imperial throne. Whether the pope was chosen as umpire by the competitors, or not, is doubtful. Charles the Bald, however, by means of rich presents and richer promises, secured the favour of Rome, and was proclaimed King of Italy, while Carloman and Charles the Gross were appointed his successors. Thus the pontiff became the arbiter of crowned heads, and the bishopric of Rome became a sovereignty co-ordinate with, and in certain seasons superior to, the court of the empire. Elated with their prosperity, the Roman bishops now sought to magnify their office in its spiritual department; giving it out that they were appointed by Jesus Christ supreme legislators in the church universal, from whom all other bishops derived their authority, and without whose consent not even the councils could determine anything. In order to support these new pretensions, forged memorials, purporting to be those of primitive times, amongst which were the famous Decretal Epistles, were palmed off upon the credulous world; and although some of the Latin, and more particularly the French, bishops protested against the reception of these fictitious documents amongst the laws of the church, they accomplished their purpose effectually, through the perseverance [illegible]d determination of the pontiffs. The mystery of [illegible]y was now more visibly at work than ever.

Rome was determined to obtain complete mastery, either by fair means or foul, and was in the end only too successful.

The chief rival of Rome, and the only check in the way of her spiritual supremacy, was Constantinople. For a long time a spirit of jealousy and animosity had prevailed between the two bishoprics, which, in the ninth century, broke out into an open rupture. Photius, who had been chosen patriarch of Constantinople, A.D. 858, by the Emperor Michael, was excommunicated by the Roman pontiff, Nicolas the First, in a council assembled at Rome A.D. 862. This was at the instance of Ignatius, the predecessor of Photius, who had been deposed from the patriarchate by Michael. Ignatius, probably, had some right on his side, as matters then went; but the Roman pontiff, in excommunicating his successor, was moved by private resentment and malice, more than by a sense of justice. Photius, however, treated the decree of excommunication with contempt; returned it in kind; and, in a council assembled at Constantinople, A. D., 866, declared Nicolas unworthy of his position in the church, and of being admitted to the communion of Christians.

Thus a schism was brought about between the churches of the East and West, more dire than any that had happened before, although such things were of frequent occurrence.* From this time the two churches were always at enmity with one another, until in A.D. 1054, their separation was consummated

* Long before this a tripartite schism had occurred in consequence of the discussions and differences of opinion respecting the person of Christ, by means of which the church was divided into three parties—the Greeks, Latins, and Jacobites.

in a schism never again to be healed. Leo the Ninth was then pope, and Michael Cerularius, the patriarch of Constantinople. As far as the spirit of the two prelates is concerned, there was little to choose between them. The haughty arrogance of Rome, however, is illustrated by the circumstance that her legates publicly excommunicated the patriarch and his adherents in the church of St. Sophia, in the very heart of Constantinople itself. Leaving the written act of anathema upon the grand altar of that temple, they afetrwards shook off the dust from their feet and departed. At the same time, the resentment of the Grecian patriarch was exhibited in an act of similar import. He excommunicated, in his turn, the legates and all their followers in a public council, and obtained permission from the emperor to burn the act of excommunication which had been pronounced against the Greeks.*

Such was the state of things in reference to the highest authorities in the nominal and divided church of Christ, at the termination of this age. It may easily be inferred that the condition of the subordinate and inferior orders was not less melancholy. The bishops universally were guilty of the grossest acts of rapacity and oppression. The clergy were as corrupted and degraded as it was possible for men occupying their station to be. Swarms of monks infested every country, and fleeced the people by a wholesale system of insolent mendicancy. The masses of the people were in a worse condition than they would probably

* Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. xi. part ii. chap. iii.; Waddington's Hist. of the Church, chap. xii.

have been, had the church never taken them under its spiritual care. The ignorance of barbarism would undoubtedly have been better for them, both as to time and eternity, than the kind and amount of enlightenment which they possessed—an enlightenment respecting the vices, selfishness, and ambition of their spiritual rulers. It was as if the spirits of darkness had become incarnate for a season, to occupy all, or nearly all, the offices in the church of Christ, discharging the mere functions and duties of a nominal religion with a view to the subjugation of universal liberty, and the pollution of the souls of men.

Truly this age is one in which we behold a complete subversion of all the original institutions of Christianity. The Bible became a sealed book; and the doctrines of the Bible were altogether eclipsed, at first by the inventions of philosophy, then by views of priestly and sacramental efficacy, and after, or rather in conjunction with these, by scholastic subtleties and corrupt practices. The brotherhood of Christ—the fellowship of the saints—the church of the living God—sustained by the individual faith of all the members, united in the bonds of a genuine love, and animated by the spirit of obedience to God and compassion to man, was no where to be found; unless, as in the days of Elijah, there were the "hidden ones," secluded from public notice in the fastnesses of their mountain homes, and preserved by the providence of God as the Waldenses, Cathari, and Puritans of an early age. The ministers of Christ and servants of the churches, appointed to feed the flock with meekness and a simple love of truth, were a rare class of men. In their stead were so many

masters, lording it over God's heritage, or assuming their right to do so, wherever such heritage might exist. The kingdom which is "not of this world," appeared no longer to have place *in* this world. The most visible thing on earth, and the most palpable, too, was the professed church of Christ. So visible was it, that its rulers had princely vestments, titles, thrones, palaces, sceptres, and empire. So palpable was it, that, in opposition to the example of Christ, it bade its "servants fight," not merely for purposes of defence, but in furtherance of the designs of supremacy and aggrandizement. The sword of the Spirit rusted in neglect, while the sword of steel flashed in the eyes of the enemies of the popedom. The weapons that were "not carnal, but spiritual," were weapons that had fallen into long disuse; while all the instruments of secular power were put into active requisition, in pursuit of the aims of a worldly hierarchy. Sanguinary crusades, which gathered together all the scum of Christendom, in order to oppose the aggression of the Saracens, were now and then diverted from their object in order to humble or destroy a Christian foe. The simple acts of a primitive worship were exchanged for innumerable masses, pilgrimages, the worshipping of images, relics, deceased saints, and the Virgin Mary. To crown the whole, the pope marched with mock majesty, but with all the force of temporal awe, into the temple; ascended the throne; gathered together around him the obsequious members of a visible catholic church; and was worshipped—successor of St. Peter though he professed to be—as the vicar of Christ, and as "His Holiness and Lord God the Pope!"

One more step, and the progress of anti-Christian error has reached its meridian; thenceforth to decline, and ultimately to give place to better things and better times. But we must reserve this for another and final chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE FOURTH POST-APOSTOLIC AGE; OR THE AGE OF DESPOTISM.

[A.D. 1073—1517.]

WE now come to the closing portion of our history; that in which we behold error and corruption at their highest point, afterwards to subside, at least for a season, under the operation of a principle of re-action. For it is not possible for error even to go beyond a certain point; and the very means which are used to push it to an extreme, sometimes elicit latent influences, which cause it to rebound with an unexpected energy and great curative power. This is especially the case when a prolonged course of iniquity has led to such a spirit of self-confidence and vanity, as deprives its abettors of the worldly wisdom and caution needful to continued success. We shall see in the course of this age how "vaulting ambition overleaped itself;" how temporal and spiritual despotism, by its very oppressions, prepared the way for its own overthrow; how after a long reign of darkness, accumulating year by year, until it approached the very depth of midnight, there was a gradual return to dawn, — a few streaks of light now and then arresting the attention,—afterwards to be increased, and

eventually to be the harbingers of a world's illumination. There is encouragement in this, and good augury to man. The time may yet arrive, in which the principles and institutions of divine revelation,—carefully eliminated, and appreciated all the more highly on account of their opposite and contrasted errors,—shall again appear with more than their primitive power, moving the minds, swaying the affections, and uniting the hearts of the children of men, without any fear of reversal in succeeding times. As one end for which evil has been permitted to enter into the world, has been thought to be the final and irreversible establishment of truth and righteousness, in the convictions and habitudes of all created intelligences throughout God's universe; so it is possible, nay, probable, that the prolonged and extreme departure of the church into anti-christian error has been permitted, for the purpose of the final triumph of evangelical truth and apostolic institutions amongst all mankind. Then will the kingdom of God be fully come, and the nations of the earth shall walk in the light of His countenance.*

But to proceed with our brief history. Towards the latter end of the eleventh century, a monk of Cluni, called Hildebrand, who had already been a successful intriguer in the election of two of the popes of Rome, succeeded in raising himself to the see, under the name of Gregory the Seventh.† He was a man of remarkable genius, suited to the age in which he lived. Full of self-possession, capable of the

* Rev. xxi. 24.

† Waddington has an admirable chapter on the Life of Gregory the Seventh. Hist. of the Church, chap. xvi.

most profound dissimulation, well read in the book of human nature, thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of ambition, with a physical temperament which robbed him of all fear, and favoured by the circumstances of Europe at the time of his elevation to the supreme power; he was just the man to gather into a focus all the preceding influences which had accumulated around the popedom, in order to raise it to its highest pitch of greatness. The wealth of the Roman bishopric was enormous. Ecclesiastical subordination to the Roman see was all but complete. Having conquered the world in his own spiritual department, it was the aim of Hildebrand to add another world to his dominions, by wielding his sceptre with indisputable sway over all the princes and potentates of the earth. He was almost successful. He became for a season the universal monarch. Crowned heads were subject to him. As if he had received a patent of divine right for the purpose, he claimed the implicit submission of the kingdoms of this world.

Of course he had his conflicts and his contests; but he came off in the end victor. His first step after his advancement was to call a council, and enforce a decree of absolute celibacy on the part of the clergy; at the same time issuing an edict against the sale of ecclesiastical benefices. By the first, he separated all the priests of the Christian world from their connexion with family and kin; and, through that, from all connexion with their respective countries; thus making them subservient to his own dominion, and more directly the vassals of Rome. By the second, he transferred the authority which had been possessed by the bishops and sovereigns—by means of the rights of patronage, in filling up vacant benefices—to himself

alone. Opposition was offered to both these measures. The German emperor, Henry, together with his clergy, were prodigiously offended with the former; and at a council assembled at Worms, commenced an attack upon Gregory, charging him with every species of crime; and declaring that he had forfeited the papal throne. This act of accusation was presented to Gregory by the imperial envoy at the Roman court. Gregory took the despatches with a calm air; caused them to be read before the council, listening with an imperturbable countenance; immediately collected the opinions of the bishops by vote; declared the decree of the council of Worms to be suspended; excommunicated Henry; condemned him to lose his imperial dignity; absolved all his subjects from their oath of allegiance, and forbad all persons whatsoever to render him any obedience in future, under penalty of excommunication. If a thunderbolt had lighted on the throne of Henry its consequences could not have been more disastrous. Such was the terror inspired by the denunciations of Hildebrand, that he was abandoned by all his subjects, compelled to transmit his crown to the haughty pope, and perform an act of royal penance. He had mistaken the power of the spiritual despot, and bitterly he repaired his fault. For three days and nights he fasted bare-headed and barefoot, in an open court at Canossa, whither he had been obliged to go in person; the pope, all the while, exquisitely enjoying from one of the windows of his castle, where he was shut up with the Countess Matilda of Tuscany, the scene of humiliation. By this means a partial reconciliation was effected. Henry was humbled. On his return, however, he set on foot measures of retaliation, and would have obtained possession of the

person of the pope himself, but for the interference of Robert Guiscard of Naples.

Such was the rapid ascendancy of the popedom. The same pretensions were displayed in every state and province of Europe. France was declared tributary to the see of Rome, and an annual payment of tribute demanded by the papal legates. King Philip the first was reminded that both his kingdom and his soul were under the dominion of St. Peter, who had the power to bind and to loose both in heaven and on earth. Saxony and Spain were alike pronounced to be held on a feudal tenure from the apostolic chair. William the Norman, after the conquest of England, was surprised to learn that he held the conquered country only as a fief and tributary of Rome. The princes of Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Russia, Poland, Croatia, and Dalmatia, were reminded of their actual subjection to St. Peter. It was the object of Gregory to subordinate the political governments of Europe to his own authority, and to establish a new empire in the West on the basis of opinion. Although the claims of the pope were not universally acknowledged, they had more success than could have been anticipated a few centuries before. The superstition of the people in all countries, arising from the neglect of their professed instructors, gave appaling influence to the papal anathema. The emissaries of Rome acted the part of diligent spies in every European court, and exercised an almost unbounded authority. Gregory acquired as much of universal dominion as it was possible for a mere ecclesiastic to obtain.

The successors of Gregory, for two centuries at least, were men of consummate talent and policy, with little moderation, and scarcely any virtues. The pat-

tern which Hildebrand had set them was carefully imitated. The ideas of Hildebrand were, in some instances, more fully carried out. Successive crusades were undertaken for the avowed purpose of regaining the holy sepulchre,* and the punishment of the Saracens for the cruelties which they had inflicted on the pilgrims to the Holy Land. By this means the power of the popes was extended. Knights, princes, and kings, together with the flower of the people, repaired to the East, under the recognized direction of the vicar of Christ, in order to avenge the wrongs done to his spiritual subjects. Every warrior became a soldier of the church. The various orders of chivalry swore fealty to Rome. Whilst living, they fought for the pope; and when dead, their property, left by legacy for that purpose, enriched the holy see. Moreover, during the absence of the princes from their respective territories, the reign of despotism was rendered more intolerable by means of the innumerable emissaries of Rome, who had thus an unobstructed way; until, returning home again these princes found how foolish the game they had been playing, and how completely they had been surrendering themselves to the projects of a spiritual tyrant. Hence the conflicts between the kings and the popes during these centuries of war and bloodshed. Hence the painful exhibition on the page

* Sylvester the Second has the distinction of formally suggesting the idea of a crusade against the Mahometans. He wrote an epistle to the church universal, in which the European powers are exhorted to succour the Christians in Palestine. (Du Chesne, Script. Hist. Franc.) Pisa alone, it is said, prepared to obey the summons. This was at the end of the tenth century. Mosheim's Ecc. Hist. cent. x, part i. chap. i.

of history, of endless conflicts between the temporal and spiritual powers from this period.

It was in the time of the Crusades that the practice of *indulgences* originated. These "bills of exchange upon heaven," as they have been termed,* had then a wide circulation. The effect of this was to loosen the bonds of morality more and more amongst the profligate and abandoned; but, happily, at the same time to disgust those who had any sparks of virtue left, any natural sense of shame, with the power and the policy which could dare thus unblushingly to palm them off upon the world. During this period, also, the various orders of knighthood—Hospitallers, Templars, Teutons, etc., were established; while the mendicants, whether Dominicans, Franciscans, Carmelites, or Augustinians, greatly increased. During this period, the *inquisition*—that monstrous institution, whose emblems are the rack and the dungeon, and whose history can be written only in blood—lighted up its terrors. During this period, incorrigible offenders against the popish supremacy were committed to the flames; and the Albigenses and other Christians, who adhered to a simple faith, and maintained a truly Christian purity of character, were almost exterminated by the devastating arms employed by Rome. The gentle nurse, whose avowed duty it was to train up her spiritual children with all meekness, kindness, and forbearance, assumed the demeanour of an incarnate fiend—a very harpy, that gloated over the

* "Sketch of the History of the Church, from its founder to the Reformation, by Charles Villers." The latter part of this sketch is by far the most accurate. The early period is disfigured by chronological and other errors, proving that the author has followed modern authorities only, and those not the best.

miseries and the expiring groans of those who would not passively submit to her word of command.

It is needless to relate the minor details connected with the history of the so-called church of Christ at this time. Suffice it to say, that from this period, or from about the end of the thirteenth century, the power of Rome began gradually to decline.

The first palpable symptom of this fact is exhibited in the time of Boniface the Eighth, in A.D. 1303. Instigated by personal resentment against the King of France, and imagining that the power which had sported with crowned heads for ages was as unalterable as his own pretensions, he treated that monarch with the utmost insolence. Philip the Fair, however, was a man as violent, as jealous of his own sovereignty, and as daring, as Boniface. He convoked a parliament of his nobles and clergy, before whom he disclaimed with scorn any temporal allegiance to the pope, and referred the question in dispute to the decision of the assembly, which unhesitatingly and loudly pronounced its opinion in favour of the king. Previous to this, Philip had caused the pope's bull to be publicly burnt, and the fact that he had done so to be proclaimed with trumpets through the streets of Paris. The pope, nothing daunted, levelled an edict against Philip, and sent a legate into France, who boldly expressed a confirmation of the papal pretensions, and menaced the monarch with temporal as well as spiritual proceedings. The answer of Philip was most jesuitically moderate, amounting almost to humility, yet without retractation of his alleged errors. The pope, mistaking the character of his supposed victim, proclaimed his dissatisfaction with the royal answer, and with increased vehemence repeated his menaces.

While the bishops and clergy of France were too timid or too politic to separate themselves from Rome, and espouse the cause of their temporal sovereign; Philip discovered a happy method of asserting his own rights, and settling the dispute in a very practical manner.* By means of William of Nogaret, who tampered successfully with the personal attendants of the pope, he suddenly surprised him in the midst of the papal dominions. On the very day preceding the intended publication of another bull against Philip, Nogaret, Sciarra Colonna, and some other nobles, escorted by three hundred horse and a larger number of foot, rushed into Anagni with the banners of France floating in the air, and with shouts of "Success to the king of France! Death to Pope Boniface!" Resistance was vain. The cardinals fled; the pope's attendants were dispersed; and Nogaret became master of the palace and person of the pontiff. A few weeks after, Boniface died.

Henceforth the splendid dream and most fascinating vision of a spiritual dominion, subordinating to itself everything temporal, began to pass away, and ultimately vanished, as dreams and visions usually do. The power of the popes had culminated; had reached the zenith; and was now visibly on the decline. The seat of the spiritual empire was, shortly after this period, transferred from Rome to Avignon, in France,—as before the seat of temporal empire had been transferred from Rome to Byzantium,—and passed through a similar series of degradations. For seventy years the popes may be said to have been imprisoned in their new scene of residence, where,

* Waddington's Hist. of the Church, p. 438.

whilst they suffered an entrenchment of their luxuries, they also endured the mortification of acting a subordinate part to France; playing the pretty game of pope, and now and then amusing the world with the feigned thunders of excommunication. Afterwards, when restored to Rome again, it was difficult to say which was the real and which was the fictitious successor of St. Peter; since one party acknowledged one, and another party another, as the true bishop of Rome. For forty years the *true succession* of the popes was a matter of doubt and fierce dispute. Then was to be beheld the spectacle of a visible catholic church—the pattern of order, and the emblem of unity—with two heads, and sometimes three, anathematizing one another in turn, reproaching one another, recriminating one another, condemning one another, damning one another, as heretics, usurpers, and antichrists!

Meanwhile the eyes of Europe were opening to the glimmering day. The people, who had so long feared even to glance from the ground at the person of so august a majesty as that which was connected with the spiritual supremacy of the Roman pontiff, now ventured to gaze upon this remarkable spectacle. In many parts it was feared that delusion had been practised upon the world, and now and then men ventured to clothe their suspicions in words. And when this unseemly strife of pope and antipope had ended, the venality, profligacy, and gross sensualities of a Cæsar Borghia, followed by the effeminacy of a Leo, confirmed the convictions of many that, for many ages, a spiritual incubus had been brooding over the nations of Europe, which, while it professed to exercise lordship in the name of God,

was neither more nor less than the incarnation of a foul and lying spirit of another and lower world. Times of strife and conflict, periods of political agitation and convulsion, draw on apace. Stars fall from heaven; glaring meteors rush across the firmament, from east to west, from west to east. The earth quakes in many painful throes, as if something new and strange were to make its appearance; and, as in the beginning of the gospel all the portentous events which conspired to make that period "the fulness of times," ushered in a meek and lowly man—the incarnation of Divine truth, holiness, and love; so everything in connexion with the prognostications of the present period, seemed to wait for the appearance of one who should, more distinctly and loudly than before, echo and re-echo the sentiments of the first teacher sent from heaven,—even the advent of that man who has been not unfittingly described as

"The solitary monk that shook the world."

APPENDIX.

ON THE ASSEMBLY AT JERUSALEM.

[Note A, p. 64.]

The opinions of Viscount Barrington, Neander, and Gieseler, respecting the assembly mentioned in Acts xv., are given below. The sentiments of the first-mentioned writer have not been appreciated according to their merits. We believe them to be the most correct of any that have been published, and therefore give them at large. Gieseler appears to take the same view, though his statement is brief. Neander seems to us too much hampered with his theory of development, and does not strictly adhere to the *facts* of the case. But the reader shall judge for himself.

1. *Viscount Barrington's Sentiments.*

"It was to these apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, that the message was sent from the church of Antioch, on 'certain false brethren coming thither,' with a pretended authority from these apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, saying, 'that they must be circumcised.' *

"Whereupon Paul and Barnabas having had much disputation with them, without silencing them, or, perhaps, entirely satisfying the church of Antioch, it was agreed and determined (for which also there was a revelation) † to send up Paul, Barnabas, and others, to the church at Jerusalem about this question: not to determine it by their authority as apostles; for then Paul and Barnabas might have done it, who were

* Acts, xv. 24. † Gal. ii. 2; Acts, xv. 2.

acknowledged and owned as apostles in that church; but first to know, whether these persons had the authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, which they pretended. This appears from the answer,—'Forasmuch as we have heard that certain men which went from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls; saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.'* For the Holy Ghost having given a full decision against this opinion, in the case of Cornelius, on whom the Holy Ghost fell in uncircumcision, I suppose these false brethren found there was no way for them to avoid that decision, and get credit at Antioch, for the imposing circumcision, but by pretending an authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem; as if a new revelation made to these apostles and received by that church, had given a new turn to this matter. That there were many who pretended to revelations in the apostolic times, is evident from several passages in the epistles.† Perhaps these very men are the pretenders to revelation which St. John refers to,‡ by which pretences they might have deceived the faithful, 'if they had not an unction from the Holy One, and had not known all things.'§

"And I believe these men's alleging that this was a new revelation made to the apostles, and pretending to bring it from the church at Jerusalem, was, together with the revelation that was actually made at Antioch, to go up to Jerusalem, the chief, if not the only reason of the church of Antioch's sending to the church of Jerusalem; it being necessary for the peace and safety of the church of Antioch, to know the truth of this fact; namely, whether the church of Jerusalem was from some new revelation come to think that the devout Gentiles converted to Christianity were to be circumcised; and whether

* Acts, xv. 24.

† Particularly 1 Thess. v. 20, 21; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 John, iv. 1—4, 6.

‡ 1 John, ii. 19.

§ 1 John, ii. 20.

they had sent these men with such a message to the church of Antioch. Accordingly, the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem meet on this occasion. When they were met, some of the same leaven in the church of Jerusalem with those pretended messengers rise up to support the same side of the question. Whereupon a debate ensues; and after much disputation, and James's summing up the debate, and forming the question, they send an answer, to let them know that they did not send these messengers; and that, instead of having had any new revelation, they adhered to the decision which the Holy Ghost had made in the case of Cornelius. This answer they sent, but by messengers of their own, to explain and enforce it; and who, being prophets, were very capable of exhorting those to whom they were sent to comply with it and adhere to it. If the church of Antioch had sent for an authoritative decision, they would have sent it to one apostle: the inspiration of one being as authoritative as of a thousand. Where do we read of sending to more than one prophet of the Lord, upon any matter, under the Old Testament? Indeed, we read of a great number of false prophets being assembled to give countenance to a lie.* But, if the church at Antioch had wanted an authoritative determination never so much, they would certainly never have sent to any more than the twelve apostles, whereas they sent to the apostles, elders, and brethren. Indeed, 'the apostles and elders' are the only persons mentioned as sent to.† But it is plain it was understood to be to the brethren too, from the brethren, or the 'whole multitude,' meeting together, and from the answer being drawn up in their name. It was usual to attribute that to the apostles, who presided in all debates and transactions in the church, when they were present, that was done by the whole assembly: as a sheriff or mayor is said to return members to Parliament, he being the officer of the assembly, though others return, or join in the return with him. The instance, Acts vi., is full to the purpose. And St. Luke probably mentions the

* 1 Kings, xxii. 6—22. † Verse ii.

elders here, as sent to, as well as the apostles, because they used to preside in the absence of the apostles.

"And if we could suppose that an authoritative answer was to have been sent from the whole church, yet we cannot suppose they would have debated what that answer should be; but that one of them, under inspiration, as the mouth of the rest, would have delivered the mind and will of God, saying "'Thus said the Lord;'* or, 'This is the mind of Christ;' 'These things saith He that is holy and true; or the amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God;' † or, 'We have the mind of Christ;' ‡ or, 'Thus saith the Spirit;' § or, some of the other forms of speech, used by the apostles on other like occasions. Whereas, their letter runs thus:—'That it seemed good (that is, reasonable) unto them (they do not say that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, as they do afterwards to a particular purpose, and for a different reason), being assembled (that is, debating) with one accord,' (that is, being unanimously of opinion from the debate). And to make it plain that they designed no authoritative determination, James declares against any such, or against making any new law or order. For his sentence was not to trouble the Gentiles (that is, not to lay any new injunction on them, as those had gone about to do, who had gone from them to the church of Antioch), 'troubling them,' || ἀλλὰ επιστειλαι αὐτοῖς, 'but to write to them (so we render it; it had, perhaps, been better to have rendered it, 'to write a letter to them'), that it seemed good to the Holy Ghost (in the case of Cornelius, by falling immediately on him, and those that were with him), and (it therefore did) to them (the words 'for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us,' naturally carry in them an inference which the assembly made from something the Holy Ghost had done), to lay no greater burthen upon them than those

* Acts, xx. 35. † Rev. ii. 14.
‡ 1 Cor. ii. 16. § 1 Tim. iv. 1.
|| Acts, xv. 19. ¶ Ver. 24.

necessary things;' which they themselves, therefore, must agree, had been laid on them before,—'That ye abstain, &c. From which things if ye keep yourselves (διατηροῦντες in the present tense, shewing it, at that time, to be a law), as you yourselves know you are already obliged to do, 'ye shall do well. Fare ye well.' This is not the style of a canon. That must have been, as St. Paul says in another case,—'And if any man comply not with this commandment, let him be anathema, Maranatha;'* or, 'If any one obey not our word by this epistle, note him, and have no company with him.'†

"This was the letter they wrote. And this they send by chosen messengers, who were to speak to them more fully by word of mouth. Indeed, the words our translators have used concerning this letter seem very strong;' 'and as they (Paul and Barnabas) went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem.' But τὰ δόγματα τὰ κεκριμένα, which we translate 'the decrees ordained,' will bear a version that carries much less of an air of power and authority along with it, and may be rendered 'the opinions which were agreed by,' or, 'the unanimous judgment of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.' Or it may be rather, 'the adjudged laws by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.' The sense and meaning of which is, 'the judgment or opinion of the apostles and elders about these laws,' namely, of Moses relating to the proselytes of the gate. This rendering would be more suitable to a letter, or epistle, that conveyed this decree; and to their sending 'Judas and Silas' (with Paul and Barnabas) to enforce it, who were 'to tell them the same things more fully by mouth;' and being 'prophets, to exhort them' to comply with this advice. Whereas there had been no need to have sent a letter and messengers, if it had been a decree in the strict and proper sense of the word. But our translators seem to have had the idea of a council framing a canon always before their eyes, whilst they translated these two chapters; and therefore

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. † 2 Thes. v. 14; Acts, xvi. 4.

make James say,* 'Wherefore my sentence is;' supposing him, as president of this council, to pronounce the decree. Whereas he does but sum up the debate in his speech, adding proper arguments of his own; and then adds διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω, which might have been better rendered, 'Wherefore my opinion is.'

"So that this decree was an unanimous answer to an inquiry about a matter of fact from the church of Antioch; and was at the same time an unanimous advice, formed upon a debate, carrying its own reasons and evidences along with it, to all those to whom the letter was addressed; and to be more fully explained and evinced by the messengers who were sent with it. And, indeed as we have no instance of any absolute decree or injunction in the New Testament, from any apostle or apostles, but, from the illumination they had received, or from immediate revelation, and speaking from one or the other as the ancient prophets do, from the Lord, and in His name; and as it would be otherwise setting them up as kings in Christ's kingdom, or lords, having dominion over our faith, instead of His servants of the churches; so it must have been peculiarly improper in that state of things, from the gifts of the Spirit that abounded so much in those churches where the decrees were sent. For they were churches where St. Paul and Barnabas had been, and had, no doubt, imparted the Holy Ghost. So that these decrees cannot be supposed to be any more than the advice of spiritual men, appealing to those that were spiritual, and desiring them to judge of what they said, as St. Paul does on another occasion.† If this were the case then, I am sure, those who would have a power of making canons, or decrees (that shall bind Christians,) inherent in the church, must have some other authority for it than this decree. For if spiritual men here do no more than advise spiritual men about a known duty, from the evidence brought for it; and appeal back to their judgment upon that evidence,

* Acts. xv. 19. † 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

rational men (as the pretensions of Protestants go no higher,) can do no more with rational men, by virtue of this precedent. Nay, and as far as this goes, when advice is to be given, it must not be by the clergy in exclusion of, or in any over proportion to, the laity; but by the laity in a great over proportion to the clergy."—Lord Barrington's Theological Works. Vol. ii. p. 171—180.

"And indeed this church seems to me, to have been at first designed by God, in his providence, and continued all along, as a church made up of proselytes of the gate, to prepare Paul and Barnabas for preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles, as well as the Jewish Christians for receiving the news of whole churches being made up of such as had been idolatrous Gentiles, (which was very surprising, if not shocking, to many of them at first, and especially to understand that they were to receive them in the Lord;) and to be in some sort, if I may so express it, the mother church of the idolatrous Gentiles, as Jerusalem was of the Jews; for, as the apostles and apostolic men were sent from the church of Jerusalem to convert Jews, Samaritans, and proselytes of the gate, to which afterwards they return to give an account of their success; so were the apostles Barnabas and Saul sent on their first peregrination by the church of Antioch, to convert the idolatrous Gentiles to the faith;* and return thither at the end of it, and "rehearse all that God had done with them."† So likewise Paul and Silas are sent out by the same church, on Paul's second peregrination‡ (and perhaps Barnabas and Mark too.)‖ And at the end of this second peregrination, they "went to Antioch, and spent some time there,"§ not barely to stay with their Christian friends, but in all likelihood to rehearse what God had done with them in this second peregrination; as they had done in the first. From hence, Paul likewise departs on his third peregrination;¶ and in all probability recommended

* Acts xiii, 2, 3, 5. † *Ibid* xiv, 26, 27. ‡ *Ibid.* xv. 40. ‖ Ver. 39. § *Ibid.* xviii. 22, 23. ¶ *Ibid.*

by the church to the grace of God, as in the two former. And as it is highly probable that, after Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, he came to Jerusalem;* so it is very probable he might from thence go to Antioch, as he did every other time he went up to Jerusalem, after commencing an apostle; and might from thence probably set out on that fifth peregrination, which, as we gather from other places of Scripture, he went upon; though St. Luke does not carry the history of St. Paul so far. And if these were the designs of providence in settling this church, as a church of devout Gentiles converted to Christianity, Antioch must be allowed to be a city extremely well suited to that design; it being a city of Syria, a country that was thought by the Jews to be a sort of middle nature, between the holiness which they ascribed to Palestine, and the pollution of other countries; and being, like the proselytes of the gate, neither altogether holy nor profane;† and consequently a region fit for a great church of the proselytes of the gate converted to the faith.

"From all these considerations, it appears that the church at Antioch was a church composed of proselytes of the gate: and that therefore the question and decree must relate to proselytes of the gate who were become Christians.

"This accounts for the rise of the question. For it does not seem probable that any of the Jews should first of all pretend, that idolatrous Gentiles, out of Palestine, and that never dwelt or sojourned in it, though converted to Christianity, should be bound by Moses's law,—who never thought it extended beyond the Jews (that is Jews born, or such as would become Jews), or such as would live or sojourn in Palestine, and were entitled to certain privileges when they lived or sojourned there. On which account, we do not find the zealots among the Jewish Christians ‡ concerned at all at what Paul had taught the Gentiles, but only at what they thought he had taught

* Heb. xiii. 19, 23. † See Reland's Antiquities of the Hebrews.
‡ Acts xxi. 20, 21.

'the Jews that were among the Gentiles.' But, considering the notions they then had, it might easily come into their heads that the proselytes of the gate, who were never admitted to live or sojourn in Palestine without submitting to some of the laws of Moses, nor to a full communion with the church of the Jews without submitting to all those laws, should not be admitted to a full communion with the Christian church, and themselves as a part of it, but on the same terms. This ran in all their heads, on St. Peter's first converting Cornelius and his family. For St. Luke tells us they said to Peter, 'Thou wentest in unto men uncircumcised,' that is, proselytes of the gate. And notwithstanding Peter had satisfied them all present, yet this notion was apt to recur among some of them. And though perhaps, they might carry this matter farther, and make this afterwards a question about the idolatrous Gentiles, in the second instance; yet it is not likely that they made it one about them in the first. Error, like vice, grows, and is fruitful. A less error, like a smaller fault, will lead men into greater. And people do not usually at once run into the greatest vices or absurdities, and indeed, I have some doubt whether the zealots ever insisted on the necessity of the idolatrous Gentiles observing the laws of Moses, as they did in relation to the proselytes of the gate. I rather believe, they endeavoured, by artifices from false philosophy, and by an address to their fears and sensual pleasures, to entice and draw them into a compliance with it. This, at least, appears to me on an attentive reading of the first epistle to the Corinthians; and I think may be pretty obvious to any one, on reading the sixth chapter of the epistle to the Galatians." *

"This is the more probable from the persons that moved the question at Antioch,—'some of the sect of the Pharisees that believed.' Such, at least, were those who abetted them at Jerusalem,† and most likely some of the very zealots of that zealous sect. Their constant opinion was, that no person

* Ver. 12, 13. † Acts xv. 5.

should be admitted to live quietly among them on the bare term of proselytism, much less be admitted to be Jews, without fully embracing their religion, and being circumcised; as may be seen, on two great occasions, in Josephus; * whilst others thought much less would do. So that it appears, from the very persons that moved the question, as well as the place where it was moved, that this in all probability was the question now first moved in the Christian church; namely, whether the proselytes of the gate, who, as the zealots pretended, could not so much as live among them, much less be thought Jews, without circumcision, could ever be allowed to be a part of the church of Christ without it; and because the Holy Ghost had given a full decision in the case of Cornelius, that they ought (as we shall see more fully presently), therefore these men came with a pretended authority from the apostles, elders, and brethren at Jerusalem, not putting it on the merit of the cause after such a full decision by the Holy Ghost to the contrary, but on a pretended new revelation, made since to the apostles at Jerusalem, and now brought by them as messengers of the church of Jerusalem to the church of Antioch. Every one will see, that this must have been naturally the first question that these zealots at Jerusalem were like to stir in the church, whatever question they might from thence raise afterwards in relation to the idolatrous Gentiles, when they became acquainted with the news of their conversion.

"So that this hypothesis accounts well for the rise of the question; whether we consider the question itself, the persons who moved it, and the place where, and consequently the persons about whom, it was moved."—Ibid. pp. 287—293.

* Antiq. 2. xx. c. 2. Vit. Joseph, p. 1007. B. p. 1010. C.

2. *Neander's Sentiments.*

"Before a public consultation was held at Jerusalem, there were many private conferences. The most important result was, that after Paul had given a full account to the apostles, James, Peter, and John, of his method of publishing the gospel to the Gentiles, and of the fruit of his labours, they acknowledged the divine origin of his apostleship, instead of presuming to dictate to him as his superiors. They agreed that he should continue to labour independently among the heathen, making only one stipulation,—that, as heretofore, the Gentile churches should continue to relieve the temporal wants of the poor Christians at Jerusalem. In the private circles, also, in which Paul and Barnabas recounted what God had effected by their preaching among the Gentiles, their accounts were received with joyful interest. But some who had passed over to Christianity from the Pharisaic school, now came forward, and declared that it was necessary that the Gentiles should receive circumcision along with the gospel; and that they could acknowledge them as Christian brethren only on this condition, and therefore insisted that Titus should be circumcised. But Paul strenuously maintained against them the equal privileges of the Gentiles in the kingdom of God; and that by faith in the Redeemer they had entered into the same relation towards God, as the believing Jews: for this reason he would not give way to them in reference to Titus, for this would have been interpreted by the Pharisaic Jewish Christians as a concession of the principle for which they contended.

"As these objections gave rise to much altercation, it was thought necessary that the subject should be discussed in a convention of the whole church; but this was afterwards changed into a meeting of chosen delegates.*

* "The whole church was far too numerous to allow of all its members to meet for consultation; but that they took a part in the deliberations

"The resolutions adopted on this occasion were now communicated to the Gentile churches in Syria and Cilicia, in an epistle drawn up in the name of the assembly; and two persons of good repute in the church, perhaps members of the presbytery at Jerusalem, Barsabas and Silas (Silvanus) were chosen as bearers of it, who were to accompany Paul and Barnabas, and counterwork the intrigues of their Judaising opponents.

"This decision of the Apostolic Assembly at Jerusalem, forms an important era in the history of the apostolic church. The first controversy which appeared in the history of Christianity, was thus publicly expressed and presented without disguise; but it was at the same time manifested that, by this controversy, the unity of the church was not to be destroyed. Although so great and striking a difference of an outward kind existed in the development of the church among the Jews, and of that among the Gentiles, still the essential unity of the church, as grounded on real communion of internal faith and life, continued undisturbed thereby, and thus it was manifest that the unity was independent of such outward differences; it became henceforth a settled point, that though one party observed, and the other party neglected, certain outward usages, yet both, in virtue of their common faith in Jesus as the Redeemer, had received the Holy Spirit as the certain mark of their participating in the kingdom of God. The controversy was not confined to these outward differences; but, as we might conclude from the peculiar nature of the modes of thinking among the Jews, which mingled itself with their conceptions of Christianity, it involved several doctrinal differences. The latter, however, were not brought under discussion; those points

appears inferrible, from the words, συν ὁλῃ τῇ ἐκκλησιᾳ, "with the whole church," Acts xv. 22. The epistle to the Gentile Christians was written in the name not merely of the elders of the church, but of all the Christian brethren. Also the words, πᾶν το πλῆθος, "the whole multitude,' Acts xv. 12, favor this interpretation."

only were touched which were most palpable, and appeared the most important from the Jewish standing-point of legal observances. While they firmly held one ground of faith,—faith in Jesus as the Messiah, and a consciousness of fellowship in the one spirit proceeding from him,—they either lost sight altogether of these differences, or viewed them as very subordinate, in relation to the points of agreement, the foundation of the all-comprehending kingdom of God. At a later period, these differences broke out with greater violence—when they were not overpowered by the energy of a Christian spirit, progressively developed, and insinuating itself more deeply into the prevalent modes of thinking. Even by this wise settlement of the question, so serious a breach could not be repaired, where the operation of that Spirit was wanting from whom this settlement proceeded. As those who were addicted to Pharisaism were, from the first, accustomed to esteem a Christianity amalgamated with complete Judaism, as alone genuine and perfect, and rendering men capable of enjoying all the privileges of the kingdom of God, it was hardly possible that these decisions could produce an entire revolution in their mode of thinking; whether it was that they looked upon the decisions of the assembly at Jerusalem as not permanent, or that they explained them according to their own views and interests,—as if indeed, though they had not commanded the observance of the laws to Gentile Christians, they were designed to intimate that it would be to their advantage, if voluntarily, and out of love to Jehovah, they observed the whole law. And as they had not hesitated, before that assembly was called at Jerusalem, to appeal to the authority of the apostles, although they were by no means authorised to do so, they again attempted to make use of this expedient, of which they could more readily avail themselves, on account of the great distance of most of the Gentile churches from Jerusalem.

"Thus we have here the first example of an accommodation of differences which arose in the development of the church,—

an attempt to affect a reunion of two contending parties,—and we here see what has been often repeated, that union can only be attained when it proceeds from an internal unity of Christian consciousness; but when the reconciliation is only external, the deeply-seated differences, though for a brief period repressed, will soon break out afresh. But what is of the greatest importance, we here behold the seal of true catholicism publicly exhibited by the apostles, and the genuine apostolic church. The existence of the genuine catholic church, which so deeply-seated a division threatened to destroy, was thereby secured."—Neander's History of the First Planting, &c., vol. i. p. 133—149, with some omissions.

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3. *Gieseler's sentiments.*

"Barnabas and Saul, at Antioch, gathered from among Jews and Gentiles a church so numerous, even in wealthy members, that they were able to bring contributions thence to the brethren at Jerusalem, when a famine occurred (44 A.D., Acts ii. 27; xii. 25). After this, the two entered on the first large missionary journey through Cyprus, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, during which the Gospel was preached to Jews and Gentiles. After they had again abode a long time at Antioch, Hebrew Christians came thither, who excited divisions in the church, by the assertion that the newly-converted Gentile Christians must all necessarily become Jewish *proselytes of righteousness*. Hence, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem, where they received from the collection of apostles, and the assembled church, a decision to the effect, that the Gentiles should only be required to accede to proselytism of the gate." —Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 74.

ON THE LITERARY HISTORY OF THE EPISTLES OF IGNATIUS.

[Note B. p. 138—142.]

THAT our readers may know all that is necessary, in order to form a correct judgment respecting the value of the Ignatian Epistles, we give below a brief account of their literary history from the pen to which we have already acknowledged our obligation.

"There are at present fifteen epistles extant, bearing the name of Ignatius. Of these, seven have the same titles as those enumerated by Eusebius and Jerome; namely,—1. To the Ephesians; 2. To the Magnesians; 3. To the Trallians; 4. To the Romans; 5. To the Philadelphians; 6. To the Smyrneans; and 7. To Polycarp. The remaining eight are addressed, 8. To Mary of Cassobelæ; 9. To the Tarsians; 10. To the Antiochians; 11. To Heron, deacon of Antioch; 12. To the Philippians; 13 and 14. To the apostle John; and 15. To the Holy Virgin; the three latter being extant only in Latin.

"The first epistles, published under the name of Ignatius, were the three last mentioned; they were printed at Paris, in the year 1495. Three years later there appeared at Paris eleven more of the epistles, in Latin, edited by Jacobus Faber, of Etaples (Stapulensis). These eleven letters were frequently reprinted at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and the only one which had not hitherto appeared in print, was the Epistle to Mary of Cassobelæ. In the year 1516, however, the preceding fourteen letters, with the addition of the one to Mary of Cassobelæ, were edited by Symphorianus Champe-

rius of Lyon, and published at Paris. The whole of the fifteen epistles were now before the public, in Latin, and no doubt seems to have been entertained of their genuineness. It was not, however, till the year 1557, upwards of sixty years after their first appearance in Latin, that twelve of the epistles were published in Greek, by Valentinus Paceus, at Dillingen in Suabia, on the Danube, from an Augsburg manuscript. Two years later, Andrew Gesner published at Zurich, the same twelve Greek epistles, from a manuscript belonging to Gaspar a Nydpryck, apparently without any knowledge of the preceding edition.

"The appearance of these twelve epistles in Greek (the only ones extant in that language), excited the greatest interest among the learned, bearing as they did upon the subject of church government, which was then the subject of such fierce controversy. The utmost difference of opinion existed respecting them. Calvin, in his Institutes, declared that 'nothing could be more silly than the stuff which had been brought out under the name of Ignatius, which rendered the impudence of those persons more insufferable, who had set themselves to deceive people by such phantoms (*larvæ*).' Others, again, of the church of Rome, as Cardinal Baronius and the Jesuit Halloix, maintained that all these epistles were genuine and uncorrupted. The controversy grew warmer and warmer. The three epistles not extant in Greek, were soon given up; but though many stoutly contended for the genuineness of the other twelve in all their integrity, the more general opinion seemed to be, that though they were substantially the composition of Ignatius, yet they had been corrupted and disfigured by numerous interpolations.

"The first attempt to separate the genuine from the spurious epistles was made by Videlius, a professor at Geneva, who published an edition in 1623, in which he divided the epistle into two classes,—one consisting of the seven epistles enumerated by Eusebius, which he supposed to be genuine, and

the other comprising the remaining five, which he regarded as spurious. He noted, also, with inverted commas, those parts of the genuine epistles which he considered to be interpolations. His conjectures, however, were not very happy; and the first real improvement in the text was effected by Archbishop Usher. He had observed that a passage from the Epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrneans, cited by Theodoret, although not found in either the Latin or Greek editions then published, had been quoted by Robert Grossteste, bishop of Lincoln, about the year 1250, in his Commentary on Dionysius the Areopagite: and also by Will. Wodeford and John Tissington, in their works against Wickliff: and Usher therefore concluded, that there must be in England some manuscripts of these epistles, from which these three writers had borrowed this passage. Upon making further inquiries, he discovered two copies of a Latin version, one belonging to the private library of Dr. Richard Montecute, bishop of Norwich, and the other to that of Caius and Gonville College, Cambridge. This version was found to contain the passage of Theodoret already referred to, and to differ in many important respects from both the Greek and Latin editions hitherto published; being, in particular, very much shorter. By means of this Latin version, Usher was enabled to introduce great improvements into the Greek text, and he published the result of his labours in an edition of the Epistles of Polycarp and Ignatius, which appeared at Oxford, in 1644. This edition contains—1. 'Polycarp's collection of the Epistles of Ignatius'; comprising Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians; and all the epistles mentioned by Eusebius, with the exception of the one to Polycarp, which he regarded as spurious. In the Greek text of these six epistles, all the words which have nothing to correspond to them in the Latin version, which Usher had discovered, are printed in red letters, to indicate their being spurious. This edition further contained,—2. 'Six Epistles ascribed to Ignatius, by the Greeks of the middle ages,' which

consist of the one to Polycarp, and the other five which had been pronounced spurious by several preceding writers. Along with the Greek text of all twelve, the old Latin version is printed in parallel columns; and at the end is given the shorter Latin version of eleven of the epistles, that to the Philippians being omitted. The work of Usher contains a valuable introduction respecting the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, the Apostolical Constitutions, and the Canons ascribed to Clement of Rome.

"Usher, in his dissertation, had intimated a hope of being able still further to improve the text from the Medicean M.S. of the Greek Epistles preserved at Florence; and only two years after his edition had appeared, the celebrated Isaac Vossius, having obtained permission from the Grand Duke of Florence, published at Amsterdam the Greek text of the epistles from this M.S. It was found that the Greek text of this M.S. corresponded most closely to the Latin version, which had been previously published by Usher; but being mutilated at the end, it wanted the Epistle to the Romans. There were thus, now, two forms or recensions of the Greek text—a longer and a shorter one; with two corresponding Latin versions. The shorter recension of the Greek text of the epistle to the Romans was afterwards given by Le Clerc, from a M.S. in the Colbertine library.

"Although it was generally admitted that the shorter form of the Greek text was much purer than the longer, yet its publication by no means put an end to the controversy respecting the genuineness of the Epistles. Many of the most glaring interpolations had been undoubtedly removed, and it was accordingly felt by all parties in the controversy, that the Epistles had acquired thereby additional weight and importance. In this state of opinion upon the subject, Daille (Dallæus) one of the most eminent of the French Protestants, published his work entitled 'De Scriptis, quæ sub Dionysii Areopagitæ et Ignatii Antiocheni circumferuntur, liber duo,' 4to. Genevæ,

1666, which contained by far the most formidable attack on the genuineness of the Epistles which had yet been made, and certainly makes out a very strong case against their being written by Ignatius, at least in their present form. This attack of Daille called forth an able reply from Dr. Pearson, bishop of Chester, in his 'Vindiciæ Epistolarum S. Ignatii,' 4to, Cantab. 1672. These two works almost exhausted the question, and subsequent writers did little more than copy the respective arguments of each. The controversy has, however, been recently revived in Germany, and the longer, as well as the shorter, recension of the Greek text, has found an advocate. Some have denied the authenticity of the Epistles altogether; but the more general opinion seems to be, that they contain part, if not the whole, of the genuine letters, though with numerous corruptions and interpolations.*

"To arrive, however, at any definite and certain opinion upon the subject, without some additional information, seemed an almost hopeless task. This, however, has been supplied by the Syriac version which has been recently published by Mr. Cureton, and to which we have already alluded. The hope of throwing further light upon the controversy by the discovery of the Syriac version of the epistles, was entertained as long ago as the seventeenth century. The attention of Dr. Fell, dean of Christchurch, and afterwards bishop of Oxford, in the reign of Charles II., had been called to the existence of such a version by Archbishop Usher, in the dissertation prefixed to his edition of Ignatius; and hoping that the long controverted question respecting the genuineness of the epistles might be settled by the aid of this translation, Fell requested Robert Huntington, then chaplain at Aleppo (afterwards successively provost of Trinity College, Dublin, and bishop of Paphoe) to use his endeavours to obtain a copy of this version. This commission Huntington undertook with the greatest readiness, and addressed many letters on the subject to several

* See, for instance, Neander's History of the Church, vol. ii. pp. 334. translated by Rose.

dignitaries of the Oriental churches, but all in vain. Not content with letters only, he made several journeys in quest of the version, and twice visited Egypt for this very purpose. On one of these occasions he advanced as far as the monastery in the desert of Nitria in Egypt, which was then in possession of the very manuscript he was so anxious to obtain; but the monks evidently concealed their treasures from him. Although disappointed in the object of his search, his inquiries convinced him that such a version was in existence. Still more explicit testimony was borne to its existence by the learned Renaudot, in the year 1716, in his work on the Liturgies of the Oriental churches; but from that time till a few years ago no further information respecting it was obtained."—Biblical Review, Jan. 1846.

ON THE FORGERY OF THE CLEMENTINES.

[Note C. p. 222.]

As a specimen of the manner in which literary forgeries were committed during the third and succeeding centuries, we give below, Gieseler's account of the fabrication of the *Clementines*, —a class of spurious writings, the influence of which was highly baneful then and in subsequent periods.

"A philosophically educated Christian of Rome, towards the end of the second century, took up the idea that Christianity in its original state must be preserved among the Jewish Christians as the descendants of the oldest church. Probably while he was searching after it himself in its secrecy, and found it dispersed among several parties, he discovered among the *Elcesaites* (or Ebionites), a speculative doctrinal creed already formed, which seemed to him perfectly adapted both to vanquish heathenism and to remove the multiplicity of Christian sects. He received it therefore, as the original Christian doctrine which had obtained its central point in James and in Peter, its most important defenders, and appropriated all the more readily the Elcesaite rejection of Paul, who, inasmuch as he was not an immediate disciple of Christ, could not have been a genuine apostle, because the Pauline development of Christianity had run out into so great a state of disunion, and appeared to have attained its height in the Marcionite errors. Hence he composed the Clementines, (τὰ Κλημεντια) consisting of three prologues and twenty (but now only nineteen) homilies, that he might be able to proclaim to Christendom at large the apostolic truth which had long

been concealed, by apostolic lips also. The historical form in which he clothed the whole work he took in part from the events of his own life. But he reckoned upon it also for the purpose of procuring apostolic authority to his doctrine, and obtaining an introduction for it into Rome in particular. As he himself had sought to travel into the East, so he makes the apostolic *Clement* (who was highly esteemed in the recollection of the Roman church, and who appears here in the character of a distinguished Roman whose mind had received a philosophical culture) to journey into the same regions for the purpose of meeting with Peter, and obtaining full satisfaction from him. Under the impulses of a strong desire for the truth, which had long been sought in vain, Peter, the only one of the immediate disciples of Christ who had come to Rome, appears here in opposition to Paul, who was the proper apostle of the Gentiles, as the founder of the Romish church, and the first bishop of Rome. He triumphantly refutes all kinds of error which had been committed by different persons, not only the popular faith and philosophy of the heathen, but also the Christian aberrations of the second century. The gnostics, in particular, are combated in the person of Simon Magus; and in addition to them the Montanist prophesying, the hypostatic doctrine of the Trinity, and millenarianism. On the other hand, Peter proclaims and supports, by mighty miraculous deeds, the following doctrine: God, a pure, simple being of light, has allowed the world to be formed in contrasts; and so also the history of the world and of men runs off in contrasts (συζυγίαι) corresponding by way of pairs, in which the lower constantly precedes the higher. From the beginning onward, God has revealed himself to men, while his Holy Spirit, from time to time in the form of individual men, (Adam, Enoch, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus,) as the true prophet, constantly announced the very same truth, and in Jesus caused it also to be communicated to the heathen, according to the law of syzygies (or pairs;) false prophets also

are always produced in addition to the true, (Matt. who corrupt the truth. Thus the original doctri Mosaism are perfectly identical with Christianity; th they have not been preserved in their purity in the Pentateu which was not composed till long after Moses; and in the present form of Judaism, have been utterly perverted. In general, the truth has been constantly maintained in its purity only by a few, by means of secret tradition. Man is free, and must expect after death a spiritual continuation of life, with rewards and punishments. The conditions of happiness are love to God and man, and struggling against the demons which draw away to evil through sensuality. For this purpose, these sectaries prescribed abstinence from animal food, frequent washings and fastings, recommended early marriage, and voluntary poverty, but rejected all sacrifice.

"While the author of the Clementines, from the position of the Elcesaite doctrine, combats parties with which the Elcesaites had never come into contact, he must necessarily go into many new developments of doctrine. How free his movements were in these, may be seen from the fact that he frequently used for his purpose our four gospels, unknown to the Elcesaites, with great critical and exegetical arbitrariness. On this very account we might indeed doubt whether he left the Elcesaite doctrine itself entirely untouched.

"Although the doctrine here presented could not calculate on any general dissemination, and found several adherents only in *Rome* and *Cyprus*, yet many felt themselves attracted by the historical contents of the production, and its refutation of the heathens and the gnostics; and since the author knew how to account for the late appearance of his work, which pretended to proceed forth from the apostolic age, they rather thought of it as the corruption of a genuine writing by heretics than of forgery. Hence, another person was soon found, probably an Alexandrian, who conceived the idea of purifying it from heretical depravations, while he altered it entirely accord-

the standard of orthodoxy in his day. In this way the production which appears under different names ng the ancients, and which still exists, but only in the atin translation of Rufinus, under the title *Recognitiones Clementis*, lib. x. The requirements of a much later orthodoxy gave rise to the ἐπιτομή." — Gieseler's Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 206—211.

END OF VOL. I.

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